

**THIS SCAN IS
COURTESY OF THE
LENNY SILVER
COLLECTION**

The New York Review of Science Fiction

Number Twenty-Five
September 1990
\$2.50

Gary K. Wolfe The Dawn Patrol: Sex and Technology in Farmer and Ballard

In the introductory volume to his *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault describes the evolution of what he calls "technologies of sex." Foucault characterizes these technologies as arranging themselves between

two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations. One of these poles—the first to be formed, it seems—centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extirpation of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls . . . (Foucault, 139).

This first pole Foucault terms "an anatomo-politics of the human body." Its opposite, which focuses on "the species body"—"propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary"—he calls "a biopolitics of the population" (139). Both trends, according to Foucault, represent an historic shift away from technologies of death to technologies of life—or more accurately, to technologies of the management of life (which can ironically include weapons systems capable of destroying whole populations). In place of the ruler who exerts life-and-death control over individual subjects came the government with its control of systems concerned with the management of whole populations. "Broadly speaking," he writes, "at the juncture of the 'body' and the 'population' sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death." (147)

Viewed in the context of this paradigm shift, popular fiction can be described as arranging itself along a similar continuum, its poles marked by two traditions readily identifiable in any popular genre. At the risk of committing yet another act of oversimplified classification, let me suggest that for convenience we label these two traditions "heroic" and "systems" fiction, the former dealing with the possibilities of the body and the latter with systems for ordering social life and maintaining population stability. Examples of the former would range from Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan novels and Robert E. Howard's Conan stories to a whole panoply of superhero stories to recent pop movie heroes such as Rambo or Rocky. Examples of the systems tradition include Isaac Asimov's Foundation stories as well as a great deal of "Golden Age" science fiction (more about which in a moment) and much of what is called "classical detective fiction."

We can further identify this polarization within individual genres of popular fiction. For example, historical fiction may concern itself with the exaggerated heroic actions of a single individual (such as in the novels of Henry Trelease), or with the sweep of vast historical forces over generations (as in the textbook narratives of James Michener). Detective fiction may describe the possibilities of significant individual action in an incoherent social system (the "hard-boiled" variety of Hammett and Chandler) or with the applications of systems of reason and deduction to maintaining social stability (the "classical" detective story

(Continued on page 8)

In this issue

Gary K. Wolfe embodies Philip José Farmer's and J. G. Ballard's systems

Tony Daniel looks at what is and what's knot Alexei Panshin slings outrage at

L. Ron Hubbard's fortune

Donald G. Keller appreciates Christopher Priest

John Shirley avoids a life of crime

Martha Barter visits the revised Earthsea

As well as reviews, slamming and wandering, provocations, letters and a mudsitorial

Tony Daniel Knot: The Problem Some Thoughts on Craft, Art and Beauty and What the Hell They Have to Do with Science Fiction

"What are you knotting there, my man?"

"The knot," was the brief reply, without looking up.

"So it seems; but what is it for?"

"For someone else to undo," muttered back the old man, plying his fingers harder than ever, the knot being now nearly completed.

—Melville, from "Benito Cereno"

Where does a knot go when you untie it? Glue two pieces of rope together, then break them apart; the glue remains. It is made of vegetable fiber, or petroleum. A knot is not made of anything. Unlike matter, knots can be created or destroyed. When you untie one, creases, bends in the rope remain. But these will disappear, with time. A knot is pure form, bent into the world by a human. There are no knots in nature.

Ropes abound in the physical world—fibers and sinews connect and strengthen—but always they are attached with glue, or pinched into tautness. The jungles of the earth cannot do what a seven-year-old does in bleary half-sleep at seven in the morning: tie a decent square knot. A square knot is not very difficult, either. The rule is right over left and left over right, and you get one every time. Here is a picture:



In case you did not recognize it, you bring into being a modified square knot (two bights are made with the loose ends for greater ease

(Continued on page 3)

Explore the Exciting World of Fractals



**Winners of
Several National and
International Awards**

The Beauty of Fractals
Images of Complex Dynamical
Systems
H.-O. Peitgen and P.H. Richter
Sixth Printing, 1990

"A wide variety of specialist and non-specialist readers will derive pleasure and instruction from this gorgeous book."
— Michael Berry, Nature

"With its stunning images in black and white and in color, it is both a mathematics textbook and a coffee table adornment..."
— A.K. Dewdney, Scientific American

"The Beauty of Fractals is simply a lovely book, and it is in itself a very solid contribution to intellectual discourse... The book suggests and illustrates the proposition that a combined process of looking, thinking, and proving is one possible road to truth (and to beauty). I think that The Beauty of Fractals is likely to be a classic."

— Leo P. Kadanoff, Letters to the Editor, Mathematical Intelligencer, Vol. 12 No. 1

1986/199 pp., 184 illus. in 221 separate illus., mostly in color/Hardcover/\$39.00
ISBN 0-387-15851-0

**The Science of
Fractal Images**
Edited by H.-O. Peitgen and D. Saupe
Fourth Printing, 1989
M.F. Barnsley, R.L. Devaney,
B.B. Mandelbrot, H.-O. Peitgen,
D. Saupe, and R.F. Voss
With contributions by Y. Fisher and
M. McGuire

"Anyone interested in the internal logic of the fractal world will find the book irresistible."
— Ian Stewart, Nature

"An excellent introduction to fractals for the student, computer programmer, or hobbyist ... this book explains what fractals are and how they are produced, it gives beautiful examples with both black-and-white and color illustrations."
— S.L. Tanimoto, CHOICE

"... a textbook, a programming source-book, and perhaps, a coffee-table conversation piece... The Science of Fractal Images will also prove invaluable in helping guide a generation of researchers in many diverse fields into a new and provocative area of the imagination."
— Eric A. Bobinsky, Byte

1988/312 pp., 142 illus./in 277 parts
(39 color plates)/Hardcover/\$39.95
ISBN 0-387-96608-0

New, Computer Diskette!
Featuring 3D rendering —
**The Beauty of
Fractals Lab**
The Mandelbrot Set Version 1.0
H.-O. Peitgen, H. Jürgens, D. Saupe
Written by T. Eberhardt and M. Parmet

Interact with and explore the Mandelbrot and Julia sets with this incredible new diskette! Find your own fantastic zones and artistic color maps. You can easily switch between 2D, 2.5D and 3D renderings. The algorithms are very fast in the sense that the predominant shapes of your images emerge very quickly. Immediately you can choose to initiate your next blow-up, or you may wish to save window coordinates for later processing of a fully computed high resolution image. These images can be inserted into your favorite drawing program or word processor allowing you to create beautiful prints. Hardware requirements: Macintosh II+ computer (processing system 6.0.2 or later) with color or gray scale monitor (256 colors/inklines) and one megabyte memory (two or more are preferred). *Macintosh is a trademark of Apple Computers, Inc.

1990/\$39.00/ISBN 0-387-14205-3

New!
Fractals for the Classroom
H.-O. Peitgen, H. Jürgens, and D. Saupe
Advisory Board: E. Maletsky, T. Perciante,
T. Perciante, and L.E. Yunker

Published in cooperation with the National
Council of Teachers of Mathematics

Following in the footsteps of Mandelbrot, this long-awaited book fills the gap between the popular and the highly technical books on chaos and fractals. If you're interested in learning the historical background and the amazing potential of fractals, but do not want to get tied down with too many technical terms, then read Fractals for the Classroom.

1990/app. 450 pp., many illus.
Hardcover/\$29.00/ISBN 0-387-97041-X

**Fractals for the
Classroom: Strategic
Lessons on Fractals**
Co-authored by E. Maletsky, T. Perciante,
and L.E. Yunker
Includes worksheets for classroom use.
1990/app. 150 pp./ISBN 0-387-97346-X

**Forthcoming—
Fractals for the Classroom:
Strategic Computer
Experiments on Fractals**
ISBN 0-387-97345-1



Springer-Verlag

New York Berlin Heidelberg Vienna
London Paris Tokyo Hong Kong Barcelona

Three Easy Ways to Order:

- **Call:** Toll-Free 1-800-SPRINGER, in NJ call 201-348-4033
(8:30 - 4:30 PM EST / Your reference # is S430).
- **Write:** Send payment plus \$2.50 for postage and handling to:
Springer-Verlag New York, Inc.,
Attn: S. Klamkin - Dept. S430,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.
- **Visit:** Your local technical bookstore. **Order Today!**

in untying) each time you tie your shoelaces. It is a beautiful idea: two brights holding onto one another, and being held.

As given, the technique for making a square knot is child's play to master. Thinking about the completed knot a bit reveals other ways it can be tied. A topologist could list all of the ways. Who invented the thing—a god perhaps?—no one knows, but the knowledge of its construction has been passed along, and down through the years. Anyone who would learn knot craft comes upon the square knot. But where does it go when you untie it?

Knots are like lops. Lops disappear constantly, but all we have to do is sit down and think about it, and they are back with us. Yet to say lops and knots are ideas, or arbitrary labels (with these words having the common associations), won't work. Everyone knows you cannot build a tower out of just wood and ideas—and, of course, labels will not stick—yet I have lashed a signal tower together over forty feet tall, and not a nail in it.

That is why a mathematician can talk about the contortion of surfaces, and a physicist can talk about fibrous friction, but neither one is talking about knots. You have to call it something else, because knots are what you make towers with. Equations are wonderful things, but they won't hold your shoes on. Still, a topologist can tie a wonderful number of knots, and a knot crafter who wishes to advance in his skills had best learn a bit of topology. The connection is technique.

Technique is rigid. Right over left and right over left gives you a granny knot, which is good for nothing, and at times dangerous. You may not like the person who tells you how; you may not like the crossing of ropes in such a way (bad luck, say some), but if you want a square knot, you have to follow directions.

So, no matter where a knot goes when you untie it, the technique remains in your mind. The knot is *not* the technique. The knot is those two pieces of rope holding onto one another, and consequently holding up a bridge or a tower. When you untie it, the bridge collapses, the knot is gone.

A knot, in other words, is technique applied to the world, or—if you like—form interacting with substance (whatever those are). A

knot is crafted out of rope and idea. Surely, without the topologist's equations, or without the shaman's vision, we would live in a world without square knots. If there were no rope in the world, the topologist would be given tenure and the shaman stoned. So, a third necessary condition must exist for there to be knots in the world: someone has to want to tie one.

No one ever uninterestedly tied a square knot. A knot must have a function, or it is not a knot. Surely, you will say, the thousands of Boy Scouts who each year sit around tying and untying knots are doing just that. Not so—they are learning, serving apprenticeships. I tie square knots when I am nervous—and always feel better after going through a few. There is no situation in which a knot crafter does not have a particular reason for tying a knot. Most commonly, two pieces of rope want joining to serve some human purpose. Always, some human purpose is served, directly or indirectly.

And this is why knot craft is valued in certain circles. Amazing things can be accomplished with knots: edifices erected, chasms spanned; rope swings hung; mountains climbed. A man is hooded in by nature. He knots a rope and climbs over the rigid boundaries. Knots emancipate and qualify. In some circumstances, knots have direct survival value. Every knot is particular, in regards to the conditions that brought about the need or desire for its creation, yet many people have found them to be generally useful, else why create societal structures for passing along the technique? Why are they generally useful? Because people encounter situations that have a great deal in common with one another. So, every square knot is generic, but each hold together ropes that are attached to the world in different, specific, ways.

As I said, a square knot is beautiful. I did not mean the equation describing the square knot is beautiful. It may well be (I assure you I do not know) but if so, then it would be the equation which is beautiful, and this is quite another thing. Not all square knots are beautiful. If someone wishes to tie together two ropes of unequal diameter, then use them to support, say, lowering a child from a burning building, then a square knot is terrifying, horrible, ugly. It will not work, and the child will die. What I meant by its being beautiful was: in many of the

The New York Review of Science Fiction

ISSUE #25 September 1990
Volume 3, No. 1

FEATURES

Gary K. Wolfe: The Dawn Patrol: Sex and Technology in Farmer and Ballard: 1
Tony Daniel: Knot: The Problem: Some Thoughts on Craft, Art and Beauty and
What the Hell They Have to Do with Science Fiction: 1
Gordon Van Gelder: Provocations: 7

Alexei Panshin: L. Ron Hubbard: Science Fiction Giant?: 12

John Shirley: A Response to David Myers re: The Clarion Circle: 19

Greg Cox: Excerpts from *The Transylvanian Library: A Consumer's Guide to Vampire Fiction*: 20

REVIEWS

Ursula K. Le Guin's *Tehanu*, reviewed by Martha Bartter: 4

Nicholas Ruddick's *Christopher Priest and Christopher Priest's The Quiet Woman*, reviewed by Donald G. Keller: 10

Jonathan Carroll's *A Child Across the Sky*, reviewed by Richard A. Lupoff: 11

Lewis Shiner's *Slam*, reviewed by Charles Platt: 17

Universe 7, edited by Robert Silverberg and Karen Haber, reviewed by Robert Killheffer: 18

PLUS

Lagniappe by Brian Aldiss (p. 6), Raymond Z. Gallun (p. 9), John Brunner (p. 13),
and Paul Anderson (p. 15); a letter column (p. 23); and an editorial (p. 24).

Kathryn Cramer, Features Editor; L. W. Currey, Contributing Editor; Samuel R. Delany, Contributing Editor;

David G. Hartwell, Reviews Editor; Gordon Van Gelder, Managing Editor.

Staff: Greg Cox, Donald G. Keller, Robert Killheffer, John J. Ordover.

Published monthly by Dragon Press, P. O. Box 78, Pleasantville NY 10570.

\$2.50 per copy. Annual subscriptions: In U.S., \$24; \$28 Canada; \$32 First Class;

overseas, \$36 (via Air Printed Matter). For overseas air mail, please inquire. Domestic institutional subscriptions \$28.

Please make checks payable to Dragon Press, and payable in U.S. funds.

Copyright © 1990 Dragon Press.

situations I have seen in which a square knot was present, its design meshed almost perfectly with the use to which it was put. That is the only kind of generalization one can make about square knots' beauty, and it isleaky as a sieve. And what do I mean by "use" and "useful"? That is where you plug in your philosophy—both moral and ontological—if you can.

Some oft, you cannot. The knot won't connect with it. I'm thinking mainly of two sorts: the aesthete and the politician. The aesthete's nerves fray at the suggestion that knots are beautiful when seen outside of ornamental knot shops; the politician (and that peculiar sub-species of politician, the moralist) sees just how useful knots can be, and, since his is the highest calling—well, he means us to tie knots to his ends.

But it won't work, because a knot ain't a knot ain't a knot: each is an individual thing used in particular circumstances. Its value—its beauty—is quite a different thing from politics. Which is not to say knots can't be political: a rope bridge spans a chasm, and now two tribes can kill instead of cat-call. But after the Yankee-chasmers and the Confederate-canyons have exchanged the last poisoned arrow, the bridge serves for travel and commerce in the Union, apolitically. What I am saying is that the knot may be tied for politics, but the marine strands are not spun with political fibers.

The aesthete is a more dangerous and more tenacious sort, if he somehow takes a liking to knots. Like a missionary to the Mayans, he will tell you your knots are so beautiful, they communicate or express so much, that they deserve to be taken out of their sordid setting. He goes blithely to the room where he keeps everyone else's knots, and your bridge collapses. Maybe he smiles to himself as he hears the sound of falling timber—but you do not see him, crushed under old nature as you are. How did this Gorgias beguile you?

With a false distinction. He is in love with ideas, and he doesn't really believe in anything. Beauty is not even skin-deep, he thinks, but on the surface, slightly above the surface, hovering, disconnected with the world. He doesn't like knots; he likes the idea of knots. In truth, he knows nothing of beauty.

The big question. Am I using beauty in the same way as when I speak about fiction and poetry? Precisely the same way. Take the ballad stanza rhyme scheme: *abab*. It is almost perfectly analogous to a square knot. Here is how you do it: rhyme the first line with the third and the second with the fourth. Studying it a little closer, you can see that if the lines are made of words (which they invariably are) then the ballad rhyme is two thoughts holding onto one another and being held in turn. When making one, you can start in several ways. Do you have a perfect end word for the third line? Start from there. Two words that rhyme and interact in meaning (cave and grave, you say? Plaster and alabaster)? Lay them down and build upon them.

What you will get—if you are lucky, inspired, a genius (take your pick)—is a verbal construction whose form perfectly fits the use to which it is put. No one ever wrote an uninterested poem or story—and the situation for which each poem and story is intended is unique.

This is where the aesthete squeals like the Platonic Form of the Stuck Pig. It is the general in art which is beautiful, he proclaims. Content is the foil from which form flames forth.

Here is the mistake: to get shining from shook foil, you need foil, and a foil-shaker. Form cannot exist in a void. When some modern painters explain their work, calling it just paint on canvas, of course they mean exactly the opposite, and they are wrong. Art disconnected from the world of human concerns is not art at all. Ideas, to be art, must have consequences.

But neither is beauty a creature of politics. Political consequences are a *by-product*. Sometimes beauty knows nothing of the good or the just. A foil-shaker shakes foil for reasons even the market researchers at Reynolds Wrap do not know. His reasons are many and in such a solution that they can never be separated. In fact, that is what the foil-shaking is—the delicate balance of this solution. A politician, seeing only political effects, seeks only political causes, and upsets the balance. He would make painting into caricature, and sometimes does.

Art—any creative act—is an individual thing, a particularity, as are the artist and the critic, and the particular circumstances of the world in which they use art. To deny the individual is to deny art, and that is more-or-less what the aesthete and politician are doing. What about a short story, then, that we call great? How come it to be anthologized, eulogized and censored? What makes it better than greeting card verse or a *Battlestar Galactica* novelization? How can we have a hierarchy of worth? What is to stop this individuality from running rampant, uprooting our carefully planted genera?

Stories have proven to be useful for achieving certain desires and needs. These desires fall into classes and genera. Many of these classes evolve—or just plain change—over time and generations. To discover what these are, and what affects them, is the great task facing critics. Fiction is not beautiful. Particular stories, which deal with particular situations are individually beautiful. A reader uses a story in the same way a walker uses a bridge. The pioneer has built the bridge perhaps for his own use in walking, perhaps for unknown (but never irrational) purposes. If it spans a river which everyone must cross, then he is honored for having thought to build it. The writer lashes together words to span other rivers. Where is the difference? And if some strange situation calls for the combination of knots and stories, and there is a person with the genius to see it, then there is something created which is beautiful, whatever we may label.

Where does a forgotten story go? I do not know. Where an untied knot? What is certain is that they do not ooze back into pure form, for they were never pure form to begin with. In this world there are no such things as Knots or Fiction. Craft and art are temporary distinctions. Whatever works well is beautiful—whatever helps us survive and makes life fun and glad.

Tony Daniel's short fiction will be appearing in Universe, Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, and elsewhere.

The Other Side of the Magic Wand *Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin New York: Atheneum, 1990; \$15.95 hc; 228 pages reviewed by Martha Barter

If the process of producing a novel can be compared to a successful pregnancy, a great many writers today seem to be taking fertility pills. More and more books are getting born as series. New writers are encouraged to market their infant as "the first of twelve!" A single book expands into a litter of four, five, or ten volumes. Authors who create a memorable character may find themselves compelled to provide the whole family history. Although Lois McMaster Bujold has written other novels (including the Nebula-winning *Falling Free*, 1987) her Miles Vorkosigan (*The Warrior's Apprentice*, 1986) took off on its own. She has been writing "Miles" stories ever since. Some writers complain—Conan Doyle tried (unsuccessfully) to drown Sherlock Holmes, and John Updike promises that his current "Rabbit" book will be the last—but more buy, and are supported by, the system.

Readers love this. So do publishers; the books virtually sell themselves. A series provides that combination of strangeness and familiarity, danger and safety, that reminds me of childhood. The characters become an extended family, the setting a big back yard. I relish the familiarity of the characters; I don't have to get to know a bunch of strangers. I anticipate the excitement they can generate, while remaining confident of their invulnerability. For instance, although Bujold's "Miles Vorkosigan" series has not appeared in chronological order, the "earlier" books are constrained by the pattern set by those already published. Bujold is currently working on a sequel to *Swords of Honor* (1986) that will detail Miles' birth; hazardous as we know this was for mother and child, we also know both will survive. They already have.

T. S. Eliot wasn't kidding when he noted that every new work

changes the whole literary canon. In a series, this is supposed to be pleasurable; we expect the changes to be challenging, but to fall within known limits. We don't expect a series to turn and bite us, and get seriously unhappy when it does. Ursula K. Le Guin has just upset many of the (now-adult) fans of her "Earthsea" books by adding a fourth book to the trilogy. In *The Farthest Shore* (1972), Le Guin apparently completes the tale of Earthsea, as the mature wizard Ged sacrifices his magical power to save magic and sanity in his world, and symbolically turns the governance of Earthsea over to Lebannon, his non-magical apprentice-companion and rightful heir to the throne. Ged is more than the protagonist of the Earthsea books, he is the hero. Once his tale is complete, so is the series. Asking what happened to him after he lost his power to effect change in the world seems not only useless; it raises questions we really don't want to know the answers to.

Worse, in *Tehanu*, Le Guin radically revises our understanding of magic in general and Earthsea in particular. In *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971) and *The Farthest Shore* we met and happily accepted a world run by moderate magic, under a moderate patriarchy, where evil deeds and excessive hubris are both appropriately punished. In Earthsea, things come out right at the end, or nearly so; the problems that persist (like the slaves of Kargad) disappear from sight and from the story. We learn that the actions of a man of power have consequences: Ged's pride leads to a fall and a triumphant recovery in the first book; his over-reaction to Cob's misdeeds virtually destroys Earthsea in the third, forcing him to save the world. The second book seems almost like an anomaly. Is it Tenar's story, forcing us to examine the dark side of magic, or is it Ged's, detailing a successful quest? If it is Tenar's, has it ended? She does not appear in the third book at all; we have reason to believe that Ged is the sole hero of the series. In the earlier books Ged's humanity makes his magecraft less threatening, but in *Tehanu* it makes him seem "feminine," weak. Women and women's magic play only a peripheral role in the first three Earthsea books. *Tehanu* shows us that magic looks quite different from the other side of the wand.

Tehanu thus forces a re-reading of the earlier books, and they don't come out the same for it. Neither does her audience. They have accused Le Guin of writing a didactic "message" book, of abandoning her young adult audience, even of betraying Earthsea. Those who complain that *Tehanu* doesn't follow the earlier books probably haven't re-read them recently. Le Guin doesn't cheat. Every problem that she raises in *Tehanu* is foreshadowed in the previous texts: every smug patriarchal assumption, every limiting condition, every unspoken sacrifice Ged makes for the acquisition of power. In the earlier books, Le Guin neither approved nor condemned them but simply presented them as "the way things are." Now she forces us to look at them anew, question them, follow out their logical consequences. It's as unsettling as learning that your father voted for Reagan, or that your sister's lengthy "visit" left a baby behind. It forces us to reconsider, not only the "Earthsea" series, but ourselves as readers of it.

As an only child, *Tehanu* would have created a different impact. As a "change baby," eighteen years younger than its youngest sibling, its message seems mixed. *Tehanu* begins before *The Farthest Shore* ends, so it must be read against the earlier work; alterations in tone and focus resonate against the reader's memory with exceptional force. A number of issues meet in *Tehanu*: the problems of series publication; of the "growing up" of young adult (YA) literature; of didacticism in general and feminism in particular; of the author's relation to the audience. Can one book resolve them all?

Series publication has always been especially important in YA literature: witness the Bobbsey Twins, Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew, the Space Cadets, and Infirmity. It has become a major part of various genre literatures as well; like science fiction, the mystery, romance, gothic, and historical genres have all produced popular, extended series. One might argue that the less predictable the tale (as opposed to the genre pattern), the more comforting the series format, and the more the audience demands it. A series can do different things. Some focus, not on the adventures of a single protagonist or a single family, but on an historical period or a whole world, like Anne McCaffrey's tales of Pern and Marion Zimmer Bradley's "Darkover" series. While most provide an attractive protagonist with multiple outlets for his or her ingenuity, like the Hardy Boys and

WHERE ARE:

ROBERT BLOCH
JOHN BRUNNER
RAMSEY CAMPBELL
JONATHAN CARROLL
AVRAM DAVIDSON
PHYLLIS ANN KARR
T.E.D. KLEIN
TANITH LEE
THOMAS LIGOTTI,
MORGAN LLYWELYN,
BRIAN LUMLEY
KEITH ROBERTS
ALAN RODGERS
DAVID J. SCHOW
ROBERT SHECKLEY
JOHN SKIPP & CRAIG SPECTOR
NANCY SPRINGER
HARRY TURTLEDOVE
TAD WILLIAMS
F. PAUL WILSON
and GENE WOLFE



In *WEIRD TALES* magazine, of course! If you're not a regular reader, you're missing much of the best fantasy and horror being published — by established masters and rising stars alike.

Come on, you know you want to subscribe! *Weird Tales* is the only professional fantasy and horror magazine in the U.S. Only \$16.00 for four quarterly issues. From:

WEIRD TALES
PO Box 13418
Philadelphia, PA 19101

The New York Review of Science Fiction 5

Brian W. Aldiss
My Favorite Outpouring

What does a writer have to offer the world at large? Presumably a story-telling ability. Also, his or her deeper inner feelings. These must somehow reach the inner feelings of a reader, or perhaps even awaken them. We may be better off without religion but a religious sense of life is a different matter.

From my first novel, *Non-Stop*, to my latest, *Forgotten Life*, I have tried to establish some such communication, with varying success. It's an idle game to pick favorites out of one's own writings, and I have no idea how to play it. However, it's clear short stories can be spearpoints of light, given a little luck.

Perhaps it's because the power of short stories is frequently overlooked that I name one of mine as worth re-reading: "A Romance of the Equator." Written in 1982, the idea seemed both humorous and luminous. It flew like a kite in the writing. Maybe it's the best metaphor against racism I shall ever fly; it's also a poem—and I hope not a poem in the neck—for love and faithfulness and continuity and all that. . . .

the Nancy Drew stories, some also demonstrate the protagonist's progress toward responsible maturity, like Bujold's Vorkosigan stories—and now, the Earthsea books.

One apparent criterion for YA literature seems to be a young (or youthful) protagonist, with whom the readers can (presumably) identify. While this has never been a hard and fast rule, we do notice that Le Guin has followed it in *A Wizard of Earthsea* and *The Toms of Atuan*; in *The Farthest Shore*, Ged is no longer young, but Lebannon is (although Inver considered him the protagonist). In *Tehanu*, only the burned child Theru is under middle age, and although her role is important, for most of the book she seems more acted upon than active. On the other hand, *Tehanu* demonstrates one (tacit) reason we continued throughout the "Earthsea" series to view Ged as an appropriate YA protagonist; he is sexually inactive (as opposed to celibate), apparently immature. Le Guin implied this in the earlier books, but never stressed the point, nor did she explain whether this was a deliberate choice or a hidden cost of magic. Wizards who consort with women (like Bendresk, Lord of the Terrenon in *Wizard*, whose wife, the Lady Secret, originally tempted Ged into opening Ogion's magic book) are shown to be hopelessly wicked and bound to be defeated. Good wizards live with their wizardly companions at the school on Roke; or, like Ged's friend Verch, they live with their siblings; or, like Ged and his first master Ogion, they live alone. The pattern is clear.

Long tradition connects magic and sexuality. In Bradley's *Darkover* series, the "Keepers" are sexually mutilated, either physically or psychologically, and this mutilation (and the hope of recovery) drives the plot of several books. In English tradition, the Fairy Queen's irresistible sexuality tempts and traps her human consort even against his will, a popular theme recently explored by Diana Wynne Jones in *Fire and Hemlock* (1985) and Ellen Kushner in *Thomas the Rhymer* (1990). (Though each book responds to a long-established tradition, neither is part of a series. This gives them a certain freedom, but requires more work from the reader.) *Tehanu* makes Ged's unsated sexual sacrifice explicit; Tenar initiates him as though he were a boy of fifteen. The local witchwoman, randy old Auntie Moss, explains the difference: "A man gives out, dearie. A woman takes in." But, like many explanations in *Tehanu*, this is shown to be overly simplified. The relations of men and women in Earthsea cannot be adjusted without pain on both sides; nor can the protagonists always see what is going on. Since they cannot readily "see" either the problem in its ramifications nor how their own actions affect it, the reader does not have it spelled out either.

In *The Farthest Shore*, Ged spent his wizard's power to save Earthsea; in *Tehanu*, he must live with the price, Tenar, who made her life-choice years before, stands as a living model, but he cannot see her that way. Nor can she. He is the same Ged he was before he lost his magic: self-centered, yet loving; willing to make heroic sacrifices, yet

reluctant to live with the consequences—in short, very human. Like the unmagical Ged, Tenar is portrayed as almost ordinary; she shows the patient strength of the parent, having rejected the instant production of magical power. We like to solve problems quickly. This is one of the great attractions of magic; it is also, Le Guin demonstrates, one of its great dangers. But like Ged, we may find it hard to see, in Tenar's good sense and loving tenacity, Le Guin's implicit praise for women in general.

This has caused some dismay among readers. Le Guin has been faulted for failing to satisfy feminist critics. Didacticism is an established condition of it, and a number of feminists hope to see it as the literature in which feminism most clearly influences the future. Le Guin has been criticized as either insufficiently feminist, or too timid in expressing her feminism. On the other hand, uncontrolled didacticism rarely produces a good story, and *Tehanu* has been criticized as overly didactic. In her collection of essays, *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (1989), Le Guin explains that she espouses the "carrier bag" metaphor of the novel, a female (not a feminist) metaphor. In *Tehanu* she has carried out her own metaphor. She has also given virtually all viewpoints a chance to express themselves. But is Le Guin just responding to critics who see her as "soft" on feminism, or is she—in revising Earthsea—seriously calling into question the whole sex/gender/culture construct? If the latter, why has she chosen to do so in the confines of supposedly YA literature?

One rather snide response might be that YA books are not read (or seriously thought about) by rational adults, but play profoundly formative roles in the development of the next generation; in other words, we may suspect that Le Guin is deliberately subverting society through this reversal of her magical (by definition, adolescent) world. When I questioned them, a number of people responded, without the slightest hesitation, that *Tehanu* is not a YA book. Some have followed this response with an explanation: "I wouldn't give it to a child," is the most cogent. It is not, however, precisely relevant. The question that needs to be asked here is, "Would an adolescent ('child' is too vague a term) choose to read it? Would that adolescent read it with understanding and pleasure?"

Here we need to remember that the prime function of YA literature (and the best children's literature as well) is not to please adults, who often want it to show how "good children" should behave. As Alison Lurie explains in her marvelously subversive *Don't Tell the Grownups* (1990), the books that young people have loved and will continue to read "recommended—even celebrated—daydreaming, disobedience, answering back, running away from home, and concealing one's private thoughts and feelings from unsympathetic grownups. They overtook adult pretensions and made fun of adult institutions" in ways that opened new possibilities to the readers. YA literature now frankly discusses the changing socio-sexual roles that affect adolescents; it explores fulfillment and sorrow, birth and death. Adults may not "choose" to give such books to young people, but that rarely matters. If the books are well written, young people will seek them out.

In *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, Le Guin expresses interest in revised sociocultural possibilities and claims that as a writer (rather than a sociologist or cultural theorist), her revisionary ideas must be expressed in story form. Seeing *Tehanu* as deliberately sub-verse, therefore, fits Le Guin's premises and keeps it within the YA tradition. Asking whether or not adults (whose ideas are usually well-formed and difficult to change, and who often reject really potent YA formulations) like the text is asking the wrong question. We need instead to look at what the book is saying, and whether or not it says it well.

Tehanu celebrates a society based upon custom rather than ritual, even while it rejects many of those customs as insufficiently flexible. The religion in *The Toms of Atuan* was shown to be inhumane, as well as limiting. It did not give the participants access to a larger, more ethical frame of reference; instead, it allowed a few adepts to exercise totalitarian power virtually without ethical sanctions. It was also completely pragmatic. In this regard, there seems little difference between the worship of the Nameless One and the magic practiced by the Wizards of Gont: both are backed by demonstrations of effective power. That the Wizards (mostly) follow an ethical code, while the priests and priestesses of Atuan do not (or at least follow a code we would not call ethics) is beside the point. Both groups have a tradition and a set of beliefs. Neither is explained as a "religion" in traditional terms, with a supreme

being worshipped less for the ability to perform practical tasks than for beneficence in creating and maintaining the world as we know it, and in providing a model as well as a set of rules to live by. Instead of religion, Earthsea is guided by custom, and by the rational understanding of magical cause and effect. This is particularly true of the Wizards, who refrain from overuse of their power lest hubris lead to disaster. It is precisely this hubris, this unthinking display of power, that repeatedly leads Ged (and with him at last, all of Earthsea) into serious (and plot-enhancing) difficulty.

Like sex, religion on Earthsea seems to be women's work, and dark and cruel work at that. *The Tombs of Atuan* are deadly. The magic is potent, but it is hidden, used for private, unrevealed purposes. The magic is evil: the more perverted the personality, the more powerful the person. Tenar, who has been claimed as a child, "eaten" by the God, and should be easily molded into the next powerful priestess, never quite loses her conscience, nor does she demonstrate magical prowess. Perhaps this is because Ged shows up before she can be entirely seduced. Perhaps something innate allows her to resist her training. This is not emphasized in *The Tombs of Atuan*, however. Instead, Ged's effective power literally helps back the dark to allow them both to escape with the Ring of Erreth-Akbe. Although Ged tries to convince Tenar that she has played an important role in that recovery, she denies it. She devalues her role as First Priestess, the learning by which she completes the tale of the Ring. She cannot value it; she has broken the cycle. No one will learn what she knows. They arrive hand in hand (like a pair of young children) at Havnor, return the now-whole Ring to the King, and Ged turns Tenar over to his old teacher. She disappears.

In *Tehanu*, we see that Tenar has made the same life-choices most now-adult women have made. She has applied herself to formal learning, and left it for marriage and children, daily toil at ordinary tasks,

friendships, sorrows, growing old. As she did not value her power in her adventures with Ged, she now gives no formal recognition to her accomplishments, any more than her society does. As a widow, she does not own the farm she helped her late husband develop. She merely keeps it for her son. Her daughter has gone, raising a family nearby. Tenar has no magical status, nor would she want any; had she continued her studies with Ogion, she might have learned much, but she would probably have wound up like old Auntie Mose: as useful adjunct to society but not really part of it, forced outside the conventional mores but lacking power to create mores of her own.

Once given to the dark, Tenar refused its power. Choosing light, she has refused its power as well. This has disadvantages; she can save the child Therru's life but cannot remove the scars of her terrible burns; she cannot restore Ged to magical potency; she cannot protect herself against those who still follow Cob's perverted dream of eternal life in death. But she can live as clearly, as wholly, as lovingly as she knows how. *Tehanu* may not arouse the heady excitement of the earlier books, but it has its own rhythm, its own urgency: the rhythm of pregnancy, the urgency of birth. At the end of the book, which Le Guin has subtitled "The Last Book of Earthsea," we find ourselves with a new conception of society, and also a re-birth of an old promise.

The impact of *Tehanu* depends largely upon its position in the series. Lacking the (magically) far more conventional background of the earlier Earthsea books against which to resonate, it could seem rather quiet, even traditional. Tenar's problems are, after all, those now voiced by many women in today's society: we are not heard; we are not treated fairly in law, in employment, in social ritual; we provide more than our share of the world's necessities, and receive far less than our share of the rewards. In simple fairness, redress seems called for. And the redress expressed in *Tehanu* is minimal indeed; in fact, it has its own reversals. Ged, as well as Tenar, is silenced, maligned, mistreated, "feminized." His growth towards maturity seems compromised, as hers does not, since she has achieved it before the book opened. At the last, the ending is at the least ambiguous. *Tehanu*'s true origin and future role is revealed; ancient magic rather than modern law seem to be re-established as the organizing principle of Earthsea; a new future for Ged and Tenar is hinted at.

Le Guin has been criticized for expressing her feminism too cautiously. Her own goal is "to subvert as much as possible without hurting anybody's feelings." The protest that has greeted *Tehanu* may indicate that neither grace nor caution prevent criticism. Again, that does not seem to be the issue. Has Le Guin expressed herself adequately? Has she explored the values—and the mutual compatibility—of gender roles and egalitarian possibility? Has she written truly, giving both Tenar and Ged a fair chance at maturity? Do we see values for ourselves in this book? For me, the answers are generally "yes," even though I fail to believe the subtitle: "The Last Book of Earthsea."

The Farthest Shore appeared to complete the tale of Ged and the Mage; *Tehanu* does not complete the tale of Ged and Tenar. They cannot resolve their mutual struggle against the forces that attempt to control life, even life after death, without help. That help does not come from a popular consensus for social change, a consensus that would support an egalitarian society of Earthsea. Nor does it come from the power of newly established law. Instead, the help comes from a source properly foreshadowed, but external to the society. This seems to reject the very terms on which Le Guin constructed her newer vision of Earthsea. Genuine social change requires altered social customs, and these cannot be created by the wave of a magic wand—no matter in whose favor.

Readers seeking an evocation of feminist strength should recognize that the ending, at least, does not present one. It seems both the most traditional and the weakest part of the entire book; it also leads to expectations of yet another book in the series, no matter what Le Guin's subtitle claims. Maybe I just don't want to believe that subtitle. A great deal more remains to be said on this subject, and Le Guin seems to have created—in the radical revision of her early series—an excellent vehicle through which to say it. ▶

Gordon Van Gelder Provocations

Been thinking a lot about horror, about sf. Been listening to people. Been too broke to afford the time to search for answers, so I'll share my thoughts and maybe you'll find answers of your own.

What I see: Science fiction accepted by the establishment, or at least an establishment. Horror scorned.

What I see: Two horror traditions—the "literary" (Poe, Hoffmann) and the "pulp."

What I hear: Movie-influenced horror receiving a "schlocky," B-grade reputation. Movie-influenced sf receiving a hip, "noir" reputation.

What I hear: People judging science fiction by its "best" examples. People judging horror by its "worst."

What I wonder: Does horror lack a Utopian drive? Is the cup half empty? Is it the cup half full?

What I see: A lot of horror stories about pain. A lot of sf stories about progress.

What else I see: A lot of horror stories with protagonists who are dumber than their authors. A lot of sf stories with characters smarter than their authors.

What I will not define: "Sf." "Horror." "Magic realism." "Dark fantasy." "Progress."

What sparked these thoughts: Discussions with K. W. Jeter and Ed Bryant. Correspondence with Richard Terra. Talks with Stuart Moore. Unpublished reviews. Editing genre fiction. A drive to understand.

What much horror fiction lacks: Humor and irony. *Where you're not reading this:* The New York Review of Horror.

What some horror does well: Shares primal feelings and instincts.

What some sf does well: Shares transcendent feelings.

What I crave: More of both.

Martha Bartter is a Professor of English at the University of Ohio at Marion.

The Dawn Patrol

Continued from page 1

of Doyle and Christie). Espionage fiction may range from the sensualist derring-do of a James Bond to the weary functionality of a George Smiley, trying only to maintain some personal integrity amid complex interlocking systems of betrayal. Even horror fiction seems to align itself along a continuum with the lone psychopath at one end (as in the fiction of Robert Bloch or Thomas Harris) and vast pseudo-theological systems at the other (as in Lovecraft and his nameless followers). In each of these cases, a fiction of the body characterizes one end of the continuum, and a fiction of the system characterizes the other end. In fictions of the body, technologies are generally subsumed to the individual's desires or needs; in some cases, the system is destroyed altogether, as when Rambo singlehandedly dismantles most of Vietnam and the American military bureaucracy to boot. In fictions of the system, the body must conform to the technologies of the system, and often the body or the individual consciousness is destroyed, as in 1984 or Brazil.

Only a few genres have focused almost obsessively on one extreme or the other. One of these is pornography, which aggressively asserts the primacy of the body no matter what the social or historical context. Another is classical science fiction—what I am calling “systems science fiction”—as it was defined historically not only by the editorial proclivities of John W. Campbell, Jr., but also by the prudent and prudish copyediting of his assistant, Katherine Tarrant. Campbell seemed as vigorous in his pursuit of “ideas” as any pornography editor in pursuit of bondage scenes, and Tarrant, following Campbell’s instructions, stood guard at the gates to insure that as little sensualism as possible leaked through into the pages of *Amazing Science Fiction*.

This explains in part why a topic like “sexualizing technology” seems like such an oxymoron when viewed in the context of popular literature. Even though pornography and science fiction have historically shared similar economic constraints—dependence on newsstand distribution, low rates of pay, the significance of small independent publishers and mail-order dealers, the disapproval of parents and teachers and the resulting fustian of the limited but loyal readership—each has known its place and its market, and neither has messed much with its formulas. It isn’t surprising that a number of science fiction writers have on occasion turned to pornography to make a fast buck: they already knew what the market was like. But for the most part, their science fiction remained relatively pristine. To be sure, there was a tradition allied to science fiction in which the sexuality was never far from the surface. From the snake ladies of A. Merritt and the Martian princesses of Edgar Rice Burroughs to the ironic superman fantasies of Philip Wylie and Norman Spinrad, this tradition has been as preoccupied with the possibilities of the body as the other tradition has been with the possibilities of machines and systems.

In the past quarter-century or so, much has been done to bring both traditions of science fiction closer to that locus of sexuality where body and system meet. In its crudest form, this rediscovery takes the form of a passage like the following, from Larry Niven’s *A World Out of Time* (1976):

He felt like a giant. This enormous, phallic, germinal flying thing of metal and fire! Carrying the seeds of life for worlds that had never known life, he roared around the sun... This feeling of power—enormous masculine power—had to be partly RNA training. At this point he didn’t care. Part was him, Jerome Corbell (30).

Certainly, Niven is on to something here. All those years of thrusting rockets and roaring jets in the pulp magazines must have meant something to the otherwise repressed adolescent male readership, but by merely embracing the obvious, Niven does not necessarily offer much insight about it. Nor, for that matter, does Robert Heinlein, some of whose late novels, as Barry Malzberg observes, “are not only about sex but about sexual perversity and its endless lacunae; they are quarter-million-word investigations of subjects—transvestism, narcissism, auto-eroticism, copulation—which not even Hubert Selby, Jr., or Henry Miller would treat so obsessively” (Malzberg, 23-24). It is as though the heirs and survivors of the old-line science fiction mainstream,

suddenly confronted with not only an opportunity but almost an obligation to reveal some awareness of the erotic energy underlying their conceits, determined to compensate for decades of editorial repression in a few swift strokes.

Simply acknowledging a relationship between sexual feeling and technological power does little to explain either. Foucault’s “technologies of sex” suggest there is a more fundamental tension at work in industrial and post-industrial societies. In terms of our schematic of popular fiction, this tension involves the question of whether the body can absorb or subsume the system (or machine), or whether the machine or system will absorb and redefine the priorities of the body. Two authors who have approached this question from radically different starting points, and yet who have each arrived at a kind of unique pornography of the machine, are Philip José Farmer and J. G. Ballard.

Unabashedly an heir of the heroic tradition of popular fiction, Farmer has spent a good portion of his career reexamining that heroic tradition with an eye to making its latent sexual content manifest—not only in the various Tarzan and Tarzan-derived novels and his infamous *Venus on the Half-Shell* (1975), with its phallic spaceship powered by the sextante-nude drive, but even in such works as *A Barnstormer in Oz*, in which we first encounter Glinda the Good Witch performing a nude pagan dance. The central machine in that novel—the biplane which carries Hank Stover to Oz—is also at the center of one of Farmer’s most interesting stories, “The Henry Miller Dawn Patrol.”

Not a science fiction story (although apparently originally intended as one), this tale concerns a veteran of the First World War, a fighter pilot named Henry Miller, who early each morning “roams his nursing home looking for attractive elderly ladies with whom to gratify his persistent desires” (Chapman, 63), while fantasizing himself back at the controls of the Spad XIII he had flown fifty-nine years earlier. The other inhabitants of the nursing home take on the identities of fellow pilots. The head nurse who seeks to foil his nightly missions becomes “the Bloody Baroness,” the orderly who protects him “the Black Eagle,” and a snooty fellow resident “the White Ghost.” Characteristically, Farmer does not hesitate to explore the opportunities for puns and metaphors inherent in the situation: “His joy stick, which was also, economically, his Vickers machine gun, became as limp as a cigarette in a latrine” (127). “He crawled on up, grabbed her big round cowdles, chewed on the propeller hubs, then eased the gun into the cockpit” (129). “Her exhaust pipe was clean” (129). “She gave a loud cry, and her fuel tank ruptured. Shut quickly out over his Vickers and his undercarriage” (129).

The technological imagery Farmer appropriates in this story is not derived from earlier science fiction so much as from pulp war fiction such as *G-8* and *Hit Battle Aces* or movies such as Errol Flynn’s *The Dawn Patrol*. But when Henry Miller remembers his days as a pilot as a time when “he’d been half man, half Spad, a centaur of the blue” (127), the story certainly suggests science fiction. In any event, the tale reveals a recurrent interest of Farmer’s in seeing what would happen if the discourses of heroic adventure could somehow be combined with the discourses of sexual adventure—an interest most directly explored in his 1968 story “The Jungle Rot Kid on the Nod,” which purports to show what Tarzan would be like had he been written by William Burroughs rather than Edgar Rice Burroughs. In “The Henry Miller Dawn Patrol,” the name of the title character clues us in that a similar experiment is underway. As in much of Farmer’s fiction, the story essentially concerns the rebellion of an individual against an oppressive system—in this case, the nursing home and to some extent the whole complex of ways in which society represses its old people—but the fact that the rebel is here named Henry Miller and that his rebellion takes a frankly sexual form lets us know that another, more literary kind of rebellion is at work also. As Edgar Chapman notes, “the iconoclastic author, Henry Miller, is, whatever his literary faults, a good example of the kind of protest against death and fear of oblivion which haunts all people; and Farmer’s Henry Miller, the nursing home outlaw, is using sexuality to make his own protest against old age and dying” (63). No doubt the story could have been told without any mention of World War I aircraft, but by making technology the controlling metaphor, Farmer adds to the story a dimension that links it directly to traditions of science fiction: Miller’s remembered machine is his body, and his triumph is his ability to control this machine-body in defiance of a repressive system.

If Farmer has done much to eroticize the heroic tradition of popular literature, J. G. Ballard in England has done a lot to eroticize the systems tradition. Ballard sees sexual possibilities in government policies, dehumanized concrete landscapes, the design of consumer goods, public assassinations, pop culture icons, even war. "The Vietnam war," he writes in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, "has offered a focus for a wide range of polymorphic sexual impulses, and also a means by which the United States has re-established a positive psychosexual relationship with the external world" (94). As this passage reveals, Ballard's language is anything but heroic, and his characters are anything but heroes. Far from being able to transcend their environments, or use technology in the service of their own purposes, they become players in the ambiguous purposes of technology itself. Already victims of a vast system, they become aggressors in promoting their own victimization.

This at least is the case with Vaughn and Ballard, the central characters in Ballard's 1973 novel *Crash*, which Ballard himself describes as "the first pornographic novel based on technology" (6). The instrumentality of Ballard's sexual epic is not the World War II aircraft of Farmer's story (although Ballard's fascination with the sexuality of light aircraft is apparent in other stories, such as "Low Flying Aircraft" or *The Unlimited Dream Company*), but the automobile, and the landscapes and structures associated with the automobile.

The car has been associated with sex in one form or another almost since there have been cars, and the connection had often been more blatant than James Dean movies and Everly Brothers lyrics might suggest. As early as 1936, Delta blues singer Robert Johnson sang

I'm gonna get deep down in this connection
Keep on tangling with your wifes
And when I mash down on your little starter
Then your spark gonna give me fire.

Among novelists, Thomas Pynchon has explored the idea of sex with—not just in—cars, from Rachel Owsley fondling her MG stick shift in *V.* (1963) to a freaked-out Californian copulating with his Porsche in *Vineland* (1990). But Ballard is perhaps the first writer to make explicit a relationship between the most climactic event of auto travel—the crash—and the climax of the sexual act. His Vaughn is not a rebellious figure who uses technology as a means of conceptualizing and ordering his sexual impulses, but almost the opposite—a car crash victim who comes to view his sexuality as deriving from and controlled by the machine. Others in his circle come to partake in this fantasy—a woman whose husband had died in a crash finds herself able to reach orgasm only in a car (120), and the narrator Ballard begins to view car interiors as "a kaleidoscope of illuminated pieces of the bodies of women" (171). Images of wounds and dismemberment, of bodily fluids mixing with engine coolant and motor oil, permeate the novel, as do popular images of Elizabeth Taylor, television commercials, and the Kennedy assassination. The only control these characters seem to have over their lives lies paradoxically in loss of control—in experiencing the crash itself, becoming part of the tangled metal and broken glass.

In one of the novel's central episodes, Vaughn and Ballard witness a staged accident with mannequins at the Road Research Laboratory. Vaughn seems almost envious of the mannequins, and Ballard in turn sees this as the decisive factor in beginning his own sexual relationship with Vaughn: "The destruction of this motor-car and its occupants seemed, in turn, to sanction the sexual penetration of Vaughn's body; both were conceptualized acts abstracted from all feeling, carrying any ideas or emotions with which we cared to freight them" (129). Far from being an heroic rebellion against the system, this "marriage of sex and technology" (142) which is acted out in various permutations throughout the novel involves becoming part of the system—becoming as emotionless and dehumanized as the machines which define the landscape in which humans must act. As Colin Greenland observes, *Crash* together with its companion pieces *Concrete Island* and *High-Rise* argue the "modern technology satisfies the irrational urges of the human mind more than the rational purposes for which it was apparently designed" (120).

If Ballard's irrational characters allow their technological environment to determine their sexuality, Farmer's rebellious octogenarian uses his technological past to inform his. If the former are victims of what Foucault calls "the bio-politics of the population," the latter is an

Raymond Z. Gallun My Favorite Story

... "Davy Jones' Ambassador," which dates back to a 1935 *Astounding Stories* and was included in that first Crown of anthology, *The Best of Science Fiction*, Groff Conklin, 1946.

Of course there are several stories of mine which I favor. One is *Skyclimber*. Back in 1981, stories about Mars were regarded as hopelessly old hat, regardless of quality or content. So first-choice publishers passed it up. It landed with Tower Books, an old house which had gone shaky and was soon to be bankrupt. So the novel got only brief and uncertain exposure in a few stores.

But Mars is back now as a stated objective for exploration and even for the establishment of settlements?

And that is indeed the subject and purpose of *Skyclimber*. With real, rather ordinary, recognizable, not particularly heroic human characters. With information about Mars as accurate as I could make it. And no sudden, wild discoveries! My hope still is that some of this novel's content may yet help a little in our real Martian ventures.

I'm thinking back to the Spring of 1935 when I was struggling to write "Davy Jones' Ambassador," a first-encounter-with-an-alien yarn, not happening on another planet but at the bottom of our local Atlantic Ocean.

I remember how desperately I wanted what I was trying to get down on paper to be tensely, vividly, accurately alive! Anyhow, I made a fast start:

It didn't look like a jet of water at all. It seemed too rigid, like a rod of glass, and it spattered over the instruments with a brittle, jangling sound, for such was the effect of the pressure behind it: more than four thousand pounds per square inch, the weight of nearly two-and-a-half miles of black ocean.

Cliff Rodney, hunched in the pilot seat, stared at the widening stream. It made him see how good a thing life was, and how drab and empty the alternative was going to be. Cliff Rodney was young; he did not wish to die. . . .

Back in 1935, I couldn't find a statement anywhere about what the water-pressure at the bottom of the ocean actually was. So I calculated the weight of a column of water one square inch in cross-section, and two-and-a-half miles high. I added a little for the salt-content. The result was too much for me quite to believe, so I cut it back some. Actually I was close to right in the first place. The real pressure is 6,000 psi.

So, through quite a few anthology reprintings, this point in the story has remained uncorrected by me.

The most important purpose of "Davy Jones' Ambassador" was to portray, with some semblance of truth, the first meeting of two totally different sentient creatures from vastly different environments. Sometime, somewhere it must happen. Hopefully there will be enough likeness for tolerance and even friendship.

agent of what he calls "an anatomy-politics of the human body" (189). Each story, without quite resorting to the fantastic, repeats its particular modality by which sexual expression and technology may be related. In the case of the Farmer story, with its allusions to earlier heroic modes, the aircraft becomes an extension of the body—first during Henry Miller's youthful wartime experiences, later in memory during his early morning raids in the nursing home. Ballard, on the other hand, refers to and critiques the systems approach that characterized so much

earlier technological science fiction. His characters move in a fantastic concrete landscape, and for them, the body becomes an extension of the automobile, a part of an enormous technological system which moves the population and even—through the ongoing disaster of auto fatalities—effects its death rate. In the fiction of systems and landscapes, Ballard seems to suggest, one way of reconciling sex and technology is to alter the sexual focus toward the technological fetish. In the fiction of heroes, Farmer seems to suggest, almost the opposite is true, and one can appropriate the technological impulse in the service of individual desire. Each author, in his own way, has arrived at a kind of fiction

of sexual technology which addresses directly the conflict between the desires of the body and the imperatives of the system. ▶

Gary K. Wolfe is a winner of the Pilgrim Award for contributions to SF scholarship and criticism.

This is the third in a series of essays we have published (see those by Justin Leiber and Kathryn Hume in Issue #22) which were given as papers in a session on "Sex and Technology" organized by H. Bruce Franklin at the 1990 Conference on the Fantastic.

Works Cited

- Ballard, J. G. *The Atrocity Exhibition*. London: Triad/Panther, 1985 [1970].
 _____. *Crash*. New York: Vintage, 1985 [1973].
 Chapman, Edgar L. *The Magic Labyrinth of Philip José Farmer*. San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1984.
 Farmer, Philip José. *A Barnstormer in Oz*. New York: Berkeley, 1983 [1982].
 _____. "The Henry Miller Dawn Patrol," in *Riverworld and Other*

- Stories*. New York: Berkeley, 1979 [orig. in *Playboy*, 1977].
 Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1980 [1978].
 Greenland, Colin. *The Entropy Exhibition*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.
 Malberg, Barry N. *The Engines of the Night*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982.
 Niven, Larry. *A World Out of Time*. New York: Ballantine, 1976.

Christopher Priest by Nicholas Ruddick

(Starmont Reader's Guide 50)

Mercer Island, WA: Starmont House 1989; \$9.95 pb; 104 pages

The Quiet Woman by Christopher Priest

London: Bloomsbury 1990; £13.99; 216 pages

reviewed by Donald G. Koller

It is good to see attention paid Christopher Priest, a writer I regard as seriously underappreciated; he writes the kind of hyperliterary, not-quite-science-fictional-enough, ontologically threatening (a *frisson* we only enjoy when done with Philip K. Dick's Rubic Goldberg gusto) fiction that Americans tend to turn their noses up at. His uncompromising public persona, in his essays and elsewhere, defending the British speculative tradition (Wells-Stapledon-Orwell etc.) to the point of chauvinism and denigrating of the pulp American tradition, has not won him friends over here; he has in fact become a specific symbol of this British perspective.

As a result, his recent commercial history in the U.S. has been a disaster: his two '80s novels, *The Affirmation* and *The Glamour*, were quickly vanishing hardcovers with no paperback editions; it seems likely that this new novel will not appear here at all. All this despite the fact that *The Affirmation*, in my estimation, one of the finest sf novels, period, and his other works richly repay reading.

The feedback from this situation has produced several creative lacunae in his career; and one can hardly blame him for wondering why he should write at all. It is, therefore, good to see a substantial study devoted to his work as well as a new novel breaking the recent long silence.

Nicholas Ruddick's monograph, despite some minor flaws, is a fine presentation of the Priest case. The "Chronology" could have been dispensed with, as all the information therein is covered in a substantial "Biocritical Introduction." This latter uses Priest's own autobiographical writings and critical essays (frequently quoted) to sketch out the author's life, beliefs, and aesthetic agenda, with particular attention to his estrangement and apostasy from science fiction.

There follow brief chapters on each of the novels. Ruddick is kind to the "interesting failure" of *Indestructible*, persuasive on the contrapuntal pungency and thematic power of *Figures for a Darkening Island*, thought-provoking in his exploration of the conceptual/metaphorical complexity of *Inverted World*. He notes the lighthearted humor (somewhat unusual in Priest's work) of the Wells pastiche, *The Space*

Machine, and the partial failures within the considerable successes of Priest's first reality/fantasy dialectic, *A Dream of Wexnes* (misleading American title *The Perfect Lover*).

As a prelude to his discussion of *The Affirmation*, Ruddick digresses fruitfully to the shorter works set, like the novel, in the Dream Archipelago; he is thus able to make use of a larger context with which to wend his way through the novel's bewildering labyrinth of interlocking realities. It is here, however, that the two extremes of Ruddick's diction, the overwrought ("Perhaps the jargon of post-structuralist criticism, indirectly grounded as it is in phenomenological discourse, can come closest to defining the novel: it is a self-deconstructing text affirming, in its refusal of any privileged frame of reference, the spirit of free play") and the thudding ("The novel is certainly complex, but is it any good?") (quotes from consecutive paragraphs, p. 57) clash the most painfully.

Most startling to me was the chapter on *The Glamour*, a novel I enjoyed (though slightly less than *The Affirmation*) for its portrait of people who can render themselves invisible to notice, and for its consecutive contradictions of basal realities. According to Ruddick's thorough and logical analysis, however, I had completely failed to understand the book because I had not figured out the identity of the narrator, which is crucial to the book's theme and meaning.

The final chapter is a comprehensive survey of Priest's short fiction, collected and uncollected; there is a fine bibliography (works listed, for once, in chronological order) and an index. There is also a half-page "Concluding Note" which, in "thudding" mode ("How good is Christopher Priest's fiction?" it begins), touches on several issues demanding full-length treatment, which rather begins to unravel a job already neatly tied up.

In general Ruddick's work, for its length, provides a useful assessment of Priest's career up through the '80s. But now, at last, we have his first novel since *The Glamour* in 1984.

The Quiet Woman further reduces the science-fictional glare he has been in the process of eliminating since *The Affirmation*; as it begins

there is little to separate it from an accomplished mainstream novel. Major protagonist Alice Stockton, a professional writer, is living a strained lifestyle in a small English village, suffering economic terror because the manuscript of her latest work has been confiscated by the government. In the distressingly flat opening chapter, she receives news of the murder of her closest friend Eleanor Hamilton, about whom she wanted to write her next book, but the narrative reticence is so extreme that the reader does not feel the impact of her grief.

This third-person narrative is one of the book's two major strands; two chapters early in the book, letters Eleanor wrote to Alice, seem to be the other, while Chapter 3, a vivid vision of UFOs causing crop-circles, from an unspecified first-person point of view, seems like a cryptic intrusion. Chapter 7, a harrowing incident which could stand alone as a short story, seems like another; it is here, however, that an electric charge switches on, bringing in the sense of ominous unease which gives Priest's best work its particular intensity.

Gradually it becomes clear that these two chapters are narrated by Gordon Sinclair, Eleanor's son; gradually his presence in the text becomes more frequent, assuming the foil role to Alice's chapters; in a process of acceleration his end up alternating with hers. The dull

mundaneness of her chapters proves to be a deliberate contrast to the weird febrility of his, which are at first merely unsettling; they become, however, more and more disturbing in their portrait of Sinclair's conviction that reality is malleable to wish-fulfillment, culminating in the final explosion of truly frightening violence at the climax, a chapter which retells exactly (before veering wildly) from Sinclair's perspective an interview with Alice we had seen from her point of view in the last chapter but one.

It is facile, however, to take Alice's point of view as reality/sanity and Sinclair's as fantasy/madness: the final chapter appears to confirm this by seemingly narrowing to closure, but in actuality opening up the entire configuration to question and ambiguity by neatly rearranging 'reality' entirely to Alice's wishes, the subtle differences from previously-established 'facts' being important clues.

Though not, I think, quite on the level of Priest's last three novels, *The Quiet Woman* is nonetheless a most worthy piece of work: finely written without ostentation, intriguing in its implications, and clearly continuing his investigation of ontology without in any way repeating previous findings. Connoisseurs of his work, and aficionados of the English way, will find it well worth their time. ▴

A Child Across the Sky by Jonathan Carroll

London: Century Hutchinson 1989; £5.95; 268 pp.

New York: Doubleday 1990; \$18.95 hc; 215 pp.

reviewed by Richard A. Lupoff

Tom Whitmore had to cajole me into reading Jonathan Carroll's first novel, *The Land of Laughs* (1980). The book had appeared in an almost invisible Viking edition, and might have vanished totally if it hadn't been rescued by Ace with an irresistible paperback cover. I went wild over the book. When Whitmore mentioned it to another prospective reader, in my presence, and the prospective reader asked what Tom and I thought of it, we responded in perfect unison, "He could have written the scene in the railroad station!"

Not should have—could have. *The Land of Laughs* is a fatally flawed masterpiece. A first novel that would have been that rarity of rarities, a perfect book, if the author's nerve had not failed him at a crucial point in the story. Afraid to confront the novel's climactic event, he had it take place offstage—and *The Land of Laughs* will stand forever, Mona Lisa with a carbuncle on her nose.

Carroll's output in the first decade of his career had been steady if not prolific; there are now five novels, each exploring a different form of fantasy: an Oz-like magic kingdom, a ghost story, a dream world, folklore-as-truth. I know that Carroll has built a following of loyal—even fanatical—readers and admirers. Myself among them. He has apparently not found his niche in the world of commerce. His American books have moved from publisher to publisher. Viking to Arbor House/Morrow to Doubleday. His presence in mass paperbacks is even spottier. Ace apparently gave up on him after two books. (Aven's *Bones of the Moon* and Vintage's *Sleeping in Flame* are trade paperbacks.)

Considering the amount of clumsily written and derivative junk-fantasy appearing these days, the absence of Carroll in mass editions is an outrage. But I suppose the publishers will print what the public buys, and the public apparently wants junk fantasy, and if so, the public will get what it wants.

In *A Child Across the Sky* Carroll attempts no less a program than the miraculous healing of untreatable disease, the reality of angels, and communication between the living and the dead.

This is an ambitious agenda.

Carroll grabs us with the shocking news of the suicide of his narrator's close friend Phil Strayhorn. Having thus got our attention, he moves the narrator, Weber Gregston, into a calculatedly sweet—even cloying—version of modern yuppie family life in pre-millennial New York. Mommy and Daddy, their little girl, Mase, who's just too cute for words, Mase's puppy Nugnug (yick!) who steals whipped cream and makes himself sick, the big glittery Xmas tree. Carroll must be trying to create a Norman Rockwell world for the modern urban professional, and he succeeds—although I'm not quite sure why he wanted to do it.

Perhaps those who live by the strange crave the ordinary.

Carroll's characters tend to speak in poetic images, as does Carroll himself when he speaks through his narrator. (All of Carroll's novels have been written in the first person.)

When do people cross the line to love? Wake one morning not only with the full taste of it on the tongue, but the sureness the flavour will stay so long as we work to keep and appreciate it?

Phil said it differently. To him, you opened your mouth one astounding moment and, with the first unexpected word, realized you were suddenly able to speak and understand an entirely new language. One you'd had no previous knowledge of. (Hutchinson edition, p. 34)

The ruminatory interlude goes on like that for several more paragraphs. I will not inflict them upon you. This kind of writing is at once impressive and annoying. Imagine being cast away on a desert island with the complete works of Khalil Gibran and no other reading matter. I know what I'd do. Put the pages out to bleach, make some ink out of something, and write a few books of my own.

There's a peculiarity of construction in *A Child Across the Sky* that made me think, in turn, of Chinese boxes, Russian dolls, or maybe a Christmas fruitcake with bits of raisin and dates and nuts scattered throughout. Very early in the book Carroll introduces a mysterious set of videotapes left behind by the suicide Strayhorn. When Gregston tries to watch them, he learns that only the first few minutes of the first tape has anything on it that Gregston can detect—the rest is just snow or fuzz.

But we do learn what's on the tape up to that point. Later on there are a couple of short stories interpolated into the novel. "Mr. Fiddlehead" is a lovely little fantasy (also published separately) that reminded me of the late Crockett Johnson's brilliant comic strip Barnaby, with Mr. Fiddlehead playing the role of Mr. O'Malley. A second short story, "A Quarter Past You," is a melancholy, very close-in, very *New Yorker*-type piece.

Through all of this, Gregston is trying to solve the mystery of Strayhorn's suicide. Gregston and Strayhorn had been collegial filmmakers as well as friends. Gregston had remained faithful to his moral and aesthetic principles.

Strayhorn had gone on to great fame and fortune with a series of gross-out horror films. Each has the word *Midnight* in its title. Each features a monstrous anthro named Bloodstone, a.k.a. Puke-Puss. The reference to Freddy Krueger in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series is obvious—with just a slight tincture of Jason from *Friday the 13th*.

The final *Midnight* film is left uncompleted by Strayhorn's suicide, and Gregston is called in to finish it. In the course of both trying to finish the film and unravel the reasons for Strayhorn's suicide, Gregston meets an angel (actually and literally) who is pregnant with a mortal woman who is simultaneously pregnant with the angel.

There is also a stock company of actors all of whom are suffering with cancer, and a children's TV-show host closely patterned on Pee Wee Herman.

Is this enough? How many more trinkets and treasures will we find in this cake?

Much of Carroll's work is referential, e.g., the Oz analogs in *Land of Laughs* and the Rumpelstiltskin theme in *Sleeping in Flame: A Child Across the Sky* contains references to *Bones of the Moon*; in a sense, *A Child Across the Sky* is a sequel to *Bones of the Moon*. But not quite. Characters and themes recur, but the story is hardly connected.

In a flashback, we learn that the actor playing Bloodstone had died during production of *Midnight Kills*, the final *Midnight* opus. Phil Strayhorn, then still alive, was also trying to complete the film.

The day of Matthew's funeral, the last rushes of his last film came back from the lab. When Phil was able to look at them, he realized two things—*Midnight Kills* was utterly mediocre, and the most important scene was missing. (p. 121)

I wonder if Carroll (identifying for a moment with Strayhorn rather than Gregston) is looking back over his own career . . . looking back at *The Land of Laughs*, thinking about the arrival at the railroad station, waking in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, wishing he could have that manuscript back.

Did Mickey Owen spend the rest of his life reliving that famous

dropped third strike? Did Ralph Branca suffer for decades after delivering the homerun pitch to Bobby Thomson? Does Bill Buckner still have nightmares in which Mookie Wilson's grounder bounces between his aching ankles?

There's still more introspection by Carroll's fictitious filmmakers. Late in the book Gregston considers Strayhorn's work and thinks:

The plot had more twists and turns than a snake on fire. What Phil had done was substitute surprise and tricks for real story. Although you were constantly being electrified with new shocks or jolts or convulsed body parts, there wasn't no story [sic]. It was that simple. (p. 183)

Is this Jonathan Carroll thinking about *A Child Across the Sky*? James Blah used to complain about referential works—novels about novelists writing novels, paintings of painters painting pictures. He called this "incest art." John Barth later called it "the literature of exhaustion."

The whole incredibly complex book manages to come to a halt, if not an end. Those mysterious videotapes, early in the book the very focus of everyone's attention (Weber Gregston, Jonathan Carroll, the reader), are apparently totally forgotten.

Subjected to logical analysis, *A Child Across the Sky* is a complete mess, a jigsaw puzzle the parts of which simply do not fit together. But the book has a strangely dreamlike quality. Its characters, its scenes, its images and incidents and insights, are highly effective.

The book left me far less dissatisfied than it ought to have.

Richard A. Lupoff lives in Berkeley, California.

Alexei Panshin L. Ron Hubbard: Science Fiction Giant?

In the course of researching and writing *The World Beyond the Hill*, our book on the conceptual development of science fiction, Cory and I came to form and express an opinion about L. Ron Hubbard's place as a science fiction writer. We gathered all the relevant materials we could find, we made what we could of them in the context of the overall picture, and then we said what we thought.

And what a thoroughly fascinating character Hubbard was!

L. Ron Hubbard entered the science fiction field early in the editorship of the young John Campbell. At this point, Campbell was still worried about how to fill the pages of his magazine with stories each month, and his boss introduced Hubbard to him as a reliable pro he could always count on for copy when he had to have it. And such was the nerve and the verve of this pulp adventure story writer that Campbell was completely bowled over by him at first meeting.

Campbell was able to put Hubbard to good use even though he was all but totally lacking in the usual background in science fiction and fantasy which the editor expected of his writers as a matter of course. This exuberant wordsmith's stories might never be of the same kind or quality that Campbell would demand from a Heinlein or an Asimov, but they were good enough to print—and sometimes they were better than that—and they were there when he needed them.

And what a personal show Hubbard put on! Here is a description of the kind of impression he could leave, written by Damon Knight in his pioneering critical book *In Search of Wonder* in 1956:

Hubbard was the typos of a now-vanishing tribe of pulp-writers like Tom Roan, who had made occasional appearances in editorial offices wearing a ten-gallon hat and swearing like a muleskinner; like Norvell Page, who affected an opera cloak and a Mephistophelean gaiter; Hubbard lived what he wrote. Big, swaggering and red-haired (like many of his heroes); sailor, explorer, adventurer, a man among men and a devil with the ladies; he cut a swath across the science-fiction world the like of which has never been seen again. (p. 29).

Not everyone bought Hubbard's yarns of his wild adventures in

faraway places. Pulp writer Frank Gruber, in his book *The Pulp Jungle*, remembers Hubbard once telling of his years doing this and years doing that, until he was deflated—and angered—by having it pointed out how old he must be by his own testimony to have done so many many marvelous things.

On another notable occasion in December 1944, there was a dinner party for Jack Williamson in Philadelphia which included the Heinleins, the de Camps, the Asimovs, and L. Ron Hubbard. From various accounts of the party, it is clear that Williamson was the nominal host, and footed the bills, that Heinlein was the actual host, making all the arrangements and running the show, but that—by common agreement—it was L. Ron Hubbard who was the star of the evening, playing tenor guitar, singing bawdy songs and pirate ditties, and telling war stories.

More than forty years later, the de Camps and Asimov would still remember how entertaining Hubbard had managed to be, overshadowing even the usually dominating Heinlein. There was, however, one holdout in the crowd. Williamson writes in his 1984 memoir, *Wonder's Child*:

I recall his eyes, the wary, light-blue eyes that I somehow associate with the gurneys of the old West, watching me sharply as he talked as if to see how much I believed. Not much.

Hubbard supplied Campbell with stories from 1938 to 1942, when his duties as a World War II Navy officer made it impossible for him to continue to write pulp fiction. Then again, after the war, Hubbard wrote science fiction from 1947 to 1950. In May of that year, Hubbard published an article entitled "Dianetics" in *Amazing* and then retired from writing pulp stories to begin a new career, first as the founder of the psychological system Dianetics, and second, a couple of years later, as the launcher of a new religion, Scientology.

He had apparently been thinking about this for a while. More than one person in the science fiction community remembers him speaking of the ambition he had to found a new religion. As one instance, in his

1983 book *Over My Shoulder*, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, a science fiction writer of the Thirties, and later a pioneer fan press publisher, tells of a time in the late 1940s when he and another small press publisher, John Campbell and Hubbard were involved in a hotel room conversation:

The incident is stamped indelibly in my mind because of one statement that L. Ron Hubbard made. What led him to say what he did I can't recall—but in so many words Hubbard said:

"I'd like to start a religion. That's where the money is!"

During his days as a guru, and as a man of estates and yachts, Hubbard and science fiction went their separate ways. But it would seem that Hubbard always retained an affection for the field, maintaining contacts over the years with certain fans and writers even when he was publicly silent and invisible. Then in his years of retirement, Hubbard, like so many others, including Eshbach, returned to sf writing. First, he produced the gigantic novel, *Battlefield Earth*, and then a ten-volume series, *Mission Earth*, as well as a record album on which he played his guitar and sang science fiction songs he had written.

At the time that Cory and I were at work on the question of Hubbard and his contribution to the Golden Age, we reread his early stories. I looked at all the comments on him and his work that I could find, including the two biographies of Hubbard that have appeared since his death in 1986. I even read *Battlefield Earth* from beginning to end, and listened to a little, a very little, of his record album. Having found out as much as I needed to know in reading *Battlefield Earth*, and not wanting to overdo a good thing, I skipped *Mission Earth*.

Learning about Hubbard as a person was my job rather than Cory's, and so fascinated did I become by his character and conduct that I wrote too much. In consequence, when it came time to cut the manuscript of *The World Beyond the Hill* by a hundred pages, Cory and I found that we had to take out much of what I had had to say about the man. The amount of wordage devoted to his stories didn't change. But since there was so much less than we had found to say about the stories of other writers, it became clear that however entertaining it might be to discuss Hubbard's colorful and enigmatic persona, it wasn't strictly necessary to the purposes of our book.

When all our reading and rereading, our discussion, our writing and our editing were done, the conclusions we came to concerning Hubbard's place in the Golden Age were these:

That the first sf stories he produced in 1938 were among the earliest in Astounding to address the subject of psi powers. (And it appears to us that the area of wild talents and strange states of consciousness in Hubbard's early stories is the aspect of his work which is most in need of further study.)

That Hubbard, beginning with the short novel "The Ultimate Adventure" in the second issue of *Unknown*, was the first of Campbell's writers to produce stories about transference into alternate storybook worlds, but he was nowhere near as original as Pratt and de Camp in the imaginative devices he employed to effect these transfers.

That his most significant Golden Age story in *Astounding* was *Final Blackout*, a novel in which prolonged war in Europe is followed by the protagonist, a natural leader of men, setting himself up as a dictator in England. This future war story, serialized in 1940, six months after the outbreak in Europe of World War II, may have been old-fashioned in form, but at a moment when Campbell was concerned to make science fiction more realistic than it had been, it was admired for its realism and its timeliness.

That Hubbard's most interesting work during the Golden Age was his fantasy short novels in *Unknown*, particularly "Fear" and "Type-writer in the Sky," both published in 1940. On the basis of his many stories there, Hubbard might even be thought of as the second most prominent contributor to *Unknown* after L. Sprague de Camp.

That Hubbard was by habit a hasty and careless writer who saw sf as a convenient marketplace, but who wasn't deeply committed to the work he turned out for it, so that even his best stories were first-rate only in brief moments and rare flashes.

And finally, that while Hubbard may have been among the dozen or so writers who made the Golden Age golden, the Golden Age would have been just about as golden without Hubbard's contribution as it

John Brunner

Quicksand: A Favorite of Mine

Asking a writer to select a single favorite book or story strikes me as invidious. (I use the term in the third sense offered by *Chambers*: "offensively discriminating.") Is one to choose the item one felt most satisfied with at the time of writing—or that which seems best to have stood the test of time—or that which earned the greatest critical acclaim... or the most money? I have preferences in all those categories.

Instead, the work I'd like to remind people about is one that I believe deserves resurrection: *Quicksand*. In it, I set out to create a tragic hero in the classic sense, a man doomed by circumstances beyond his control. It's now more than twenty years old, but on glancing through it again I'm convinced it hasn't dated.

The story of psychiatrist Paul Fidler and the mysterious girl Urechin, who may or may not come from the future, seems to me to possess a timeless quality, for it treats of timeless subjects: love and jealousy, fear and pity, passion and despair. Tom Dineen said it would make a wonderful play. I think it would make a fine low-budget film. Even after all this time I could lead a would-be director to the locations I had in mind. That aside, if you spot a second-hand copy (it's long out of print, alas) I promise you it's well worth reading.

was with it. His work may have been necessary, in the sense that it served the useful function of keeping Campbell's magazines running, but it wasn't essential to the development of modern science fiction. His stories weren't notable for their transcendence. Nor was he one of the key writers involved in the conceptual restructuring of space, time and dimension that was the central undertaking of the great Campbellian Works Project.

This, at least, is the way that Cory and I saw Hubbard.

But our view of the significance of his work is apparently not shared by everyone. In the March 1990 issue of *PFSF*, Algis Budrys says:

The fact is that L. Ron Hubbard played a much larger part in the development of *Astounding* (and *Unknown*) than he is generally given credit for, now that the past is receding swiftly into legend. While events were fresher in the minds of fans, there was no doubt that Campbell's Big Three were Heinlein, Hubbard, and van Vogt.

Wow! What a reversal of the usual valuation!

Cory's and my intent in writing *The World Beyond the Hill* was to speak for the science fiction community as a whole, to tell the real story of sf both as truthfully and as insightfully as we could. And in the picture of the Golden Age as we put it together, it seemed to us that a complete and accurate portrait would have the great editor, John Campbell, at the center. Closely grouped around him would be his chief synthesizers, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov, and the mystic visionary A. E. van Vogt. Framing this central group would be E. E. Smith on one side, and "Lewis Padgett"—Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore—on the other.

Lending support to them would be another half-a-dozen writers—Jack Williamson, Lester del Rey, Clifford Simak, L. Ron Hubbard, Fritz Leiber and Theodore Sturgeon. And filling out the picture there would be many many others.

Hubbard would be present among the supporting players primarily on the basis of the sheer volume of material he contributed to Campbell's magazines at their most creative moment. In the long run, however, all of his peers—as well as some of the extra players of the Golden Age like Fredric Brown, Hal Clement and Murray Leinster—would produce far more significant bodies of work.

Yet here have Algis Budrys suggesting that a true snapshot of Campbell's star writers of the Golden Age—at least in the estimate of fans of the time—would have L. Ron Hubbard in the middle, with his

The New York Review of Science Fiction 13

arms companionably draped around the shoulders of Heinlein and van Vogt.

Hmm. Even granted that there might be a difference between a fanish response at one certain moment and a well-considered long-term view, this really does give pause for thought.

Cory and I aren't old enough to have been fans of science fiction during the period we are writing about. We have no firsthand memories of anything discussed in *The World Beyond the Hill*. We've had to depend on the materials we have managed to gather and upon our own assessments, and it is more than probable that we have made our share of mistakes along the way.

Algis Budrys has been reading science fiction longer than we have. He first wrote it nearly forty years ago, and has been reviewing it for nearly thirty. What if he is right? Could it be possible that we have done an inadvertent injustice to a central contributor to the making of modern science fiction?

I've certainly been sufficiently curious to try to check the matter out. I'm not ambitious enough to track down and read all of Hubbard's stories one more time, but I have been willing to spend a little time reviewing the opinion of the science fiction community on the subject of Hubbard's fiction through the years. Admittedly, this check has been a brief one, so it is possible that somewhere along the line I've neglected some pseudonym, or gotten a number wrong by one or two counting stories and books, or overlooked a comment on Hubbard's work that I might have taken into consideration. All in all, however, you may take it that I've done my best to assemble a fair summation of the documented reaction to Hubbard's career as a science fiction writer by those best placed to observe it.

I'll give what I found in three parts: various views of his early days as an sf writer from 1938 to 1942; the reaction to his second stint in the science fiction pulps from 1947 to 1950 and to his career as a whole when it seemed that he had permanently moved on to greener pastures; and the response to his work in the years since it first saw publication.

The initial thing I did was to check the *An Lab* ratings in *Anteviewing* of all the stories that Hubbard published there during the Golden Age. These scores can serve as a direct indication of fan opinion of his fiction at the time it originally appeared.

I count sixteen contributions by Hubbard to *Anteviewing* before he went off to war. Most of these were not well received, ranking consistently with the also-rans. None of his stories was rated second in its issue. Just one, *Final Blackout*, was rated first.

Since Hubbard has been presented as one of a kind with Heinlein and van Vogt during the Golden Age, we can compare this showing to their records during the same period. From 1939 to 1942, Robert Heinlein also had sixteen contributions in *Anteviewing*. Ten of them were rated first in their issues—and in some of these issues the second-rated story was by Heinlein as well. During the same years, A.E. van Vogt had fourteen stories in *Anteviewing*. Six of these were rated first, and another four came in second.

Even so there is a measure of truth to Budrys's claim that there was a moment when a young science fiction fan like himself might reasonably have spoken Hubbard's name in the same breath with that of Heinlein and van Vogt. This moment came early in 1941, looking back over the previous year. It didn't last long, because the Golden Age was young and had many changes yet to go through, and still there was such a moment, however brief.

1940 was Hubbard's high point as an sf writer. In that year, he had no fewer than four short novels in *Unknown*, including "Fear" and "Typewriter in the Sky," and *Final Blackout* was serialized in *Anteviewing*. This novel may have been Hubbard's only pre-war science fiction success, but in itself it made a big impression on readers. Judging from letters printed in the *Anteviewing* letter column, it would be fair to call it the third favorite story in the magazine in 1940, behind A.E. van Vogt's *Silen* and Robert Heinlein's "If This Goes On—"

Writing in his book *Seekers of Tomorrow* some twenty-five years later, science fiction historian Sam Moskowitz could still think that *Final Blackout* was superior to Heinlein's story, even as he admitted that it had never been as influential. He would describe it as "powerfully written, prophetically warning, with the principal character magnificently drawn."

It is perfectly reasonable, then, that in early 1941, a ten-year-old

science fiction reader like Budrys, a recent refugee from Hitler and Stalin, might look with fondness upon a story like *Final Blackout* and think of Hubbard as one of Campbell's Big Three. And he wouldn't be alone in this regard. As late as 1945, when the early Golden Age was a few years in the past and *Anteviewing* had taken on a new shrunken shape and a new set of authors to replace those who had gone off to war, a young Damon Knight, writing a first essay in which he castigated A. E. van Vogt for his myriad writing sins, could see fit to name L. Ron Hubbard as one of the missing writers he regarded more highly:

In the absence of Heinlein, Hubbard, de Camp and the rest of *Anteviewing's* vanished prewar writers, van Vogt stands like a giant. But he is no giant; he is a pygmy who has learned to operate an overgrown typewriter (page 50).

(Whatever that may have meant.)

Another contemporary view of the Hubbard of the Golden Age exists, this one from more mature and knowledgeable observers situated a little closer to Hubbard and his work.

In those days, Heinlein, living in Los Angeles, held regular social gatherings of science fiction writers under the jocular name of Mahana Literary Society, and Hubbard was an occasional visitor. Mystery writer William Anthony Parker White, who would edit *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* as "Anthony Boucher," was a fascinated observer of this circle, and in a 1942 detective story a *clef*-signed H.H. Holmes—*Rocket to the Morgue*—he presented a portrait of Hubbard under the name D. Vance Wimpole. A figure primarily modeled upon Heinlein—and sounding very like him—says of this roguish character:

"There, sir, is one of the damndest and most fabulous figures in the whole pulp field, and he tackles most of it. Fair on science fiction and excellent on fantasy. But what I mean by fabulous: One night in New York Don Stuart and I were seeing him off to Chicago. He got to talking and outlined a fantasy short ad lib from hook to tag. Don liked it, but said, 'The trouble is, now you'll never write it. You never do write what you've talked out first.' And Vance said, 'Oh, won't I?'"

"He left by train for Chicago around eight. The next morning the story was on Don's desk, air-mail special delivery from Chi. I won't say it was a masterpiece, but it was publishable as it stood and it drew good fan mail."

This picture of an agile word merchant whose most impressive quality is speed is reinforced when Wimpole, in need of quick cash, says "I can do a novelet worth three hundred in four or five days. Send it off airmail, and Stuart always mails my checks airmail. . . . A week from today you'll have the five hundred."

Hubbard was missing from the science fiction magazines for four and a half years during the war and after, but in 1947 he returned to writing for Campbell with a serial novel entitled *Not Yet the End*. And he continued contributing fiction to the magazine through a second serial, *To the Stars*, in February and March 1950.

By my count, Hubbard appeared in *Anteviewing* fifteen times during this second period of sf writing. Of these, three stories—two novelets and Hubbard's final novel—were rated first in their issues.

Overall, however, this postwar work wasn't highly impressive. Like L. Sprague de Camp, Hubbard was less adept at science fiction than he was at fantasy and missed *Unknown*, which had fallen victim to the wartime paper shortage. Commenting on Hubbard in *Seekers of Tomorrow* in 1966, Sam Moskowitz says that it was a long time after the war "before his writing seemed to assume its old magic." In fact, it was only in Hubbard's final novel that Moskowitz was able to perceive this spark.

As I look back upon all 31 of Hubbard's contributions to *Anteviewing* from 1938 to 1950, it seems apparent that he was never hugely popular with the readers of the magazine. Hubbard's stories were rated fourth or worse a total of 18 times, and they were often among the lowest rated in the issue—even at those times when an issue of *Anteviewing* might contain as many as nine stories.

As an indication of the degree of impact that Hubbard had on the magazine—or didn't have—we might consider a letter from a reader named Richard Hoen published in the November 1948 issue of

Poul Anderson Author's Choice

Whenever asked which one of my works is my own favorite, I reply that that's like asking the father of several children which one is best, and decline to name any. However, of course a writer does look more fondly on some than on others, because it seems more of a challenge to write or for whatever reason. In this sense, if forced to pick a single piece, I'd probably choose a novel that never had much popular success, a fantasy called *A Midsummer Tempest*. It's set in a universe where the plays of Shakespeare tell the exact truth; he wasn't a dramatist but a historian. Working out the wacky implications of that postulate was a joyous task. Also, since most of the dialogue is, naturally, in blank verse, I was freed from the restraints of realism and could let the language roll forth as it wanted. Evidently this was caviar to the general. Still, years later a young man told me that high school English had convinced him, as it almost always does, that Shakespeare is an utter bore. Then he read my book, decided to give the original another chance, and found how much entertainment is there. I felt quite well rewarded.

Asounding. For quite a while after the war, Campbell and his magazine were in a state of shock, feeling responsible for the atomic bomb and not having a clue as to what might be done about it, and there were many fans who longed for a return to the confident mastery of the universe and the gleefully wild imaginings that had characterized the Golden Age. Hoen was one of these, and he tried to express his feelings in his letter with all the imaginative power he could muster.

Hoen, dating his letter one year in the future, wrote of his desires as though they had become actualities. He spoke of the happy revival of *Unknown*. He was delighted by the return of *Asounding* to its oldtime larger size. And he hailed the advent of a new serial story by "Doc" Smith, the beginning of a whole new story series.

Most interestingly, however, Hoen reported his ratings of the stories in the November 1949 issue of the new *old Asounding* of his dreams. We may take this as one representative reader's idea of who and what had really been important during the Golden Age.

The top story was by Don A. Stuart, John Campbell's alter ego. Second place went to Anson MacDonald, recognized by Hoen to be Robert Heinlein in clever plastic disguise. Third place went to a story by A.E. van Vogt, fourth place to Lester del Rey, fifth place to L. Sprague de Camp, and sixth place to Theodore Sturgeon. "But," Hoen said, "even this yarn was way above average."

Campbell's response to this letter was to suggest that it must be a vision from "another time track." But then he basted his butt to see that the actual November 1949 issue of *Asounding* matched Hoen's letter as closely as he could arrange it. This was the famous "trick issue" or "prediction issue" of *Asounding*. It contained stories by de Camp and Sturgeon and van Vogt and del Rey and Heinlein (first MacDonald) with precisely the titles that Hoen had foreseen, with a substitution of the first installment of the climactic Foundation serial by Isaac Asimov for the cover story by Don A. Stuart.

In short, at a time when the Golden Age of *Asounding* was still fresh in memory, we have no fewer than eight different writers, including Stuart and Smith, presented by Hoen and John Campbell as its representative figures. But L. Ron Hubbard was not among them.

In the early Fifties, after Hubbard had ceased to write science fiction, the critics and historians of sf then emerging began to offer comment on the nature and value of the body of work he had left behind.

In 1951, the fan publisher Gnome Press issued "Pear" and "Typewriter in the Sky" in one volume, and Damon Knight reviewed the book. With a little more time and experience under his belt, Knight had grown to see Hubbard as a writer of stories that could easily have been better than they were.

Of this one-time favorite writer, he concluded, "In this volume

and elsewhere, there is ample proof that Hubbard had an exquisite word sense, when he wanted to use it; and equally ample proof that he seldom bothered."

Two years later, in *Science-Fiction Handbook*, L. Sprague de Camp discussed the eighteen most prominent sf writers of the magazine era without including Hubbard, who on the basis of sheer words might well have merited the honor. Elsewhere in the book, however, in the context of Hubbard's founding of Dianetics and the fuss it raised in the science fiction community, de Camp did give his work a brief description. He said:

Hubbard's stories fall into two groups: light humorous adventure-tales, zestful and amusing though carelessly thrown together, and more serious stories wherein the hero is a lonely leader, a solitary natural aristocrat who has to kick the unappreciative clods around for their own good. It is easy to surmise whom Hubbard has in mind in his portrayal of this character (page 94).

It was these two opinions of Hubbard's writing that were most available to young readers like me who discovered sf in the early Fifties. It was still dominated by the memory of the Golden Age then. Coming along all these years after the fact, it was necessary for us to piece its glories together for ourselves from the stories and novels that publishers saw fit to put in book form, and from the clues contained in books like de Camp's *Science-Fiction Handbook* and Knight's *In Search of Wonder*.

My starting point in reading adult sf was the giant anthologies of stories gathered from the pulp magazines—with the greatest emphasis on the Golden Age. *Asounding*—that were published in the years immediately after World War II when L. Ron Hubbard was still an active factor in the field. Six books stood out in particular: there was Healy and McComa's magnificent *Adventures in Time and Space* from Random House; there were four massive story collections edited by Groff Conklin and published by Crown, the earliest of which was a kind of informal historical summary, while the other three were increasingly weighted toward more contemporary work; and there was John Campbell's own *Asounding Science Fiction Anthology* from Simon & Schuster.

I found these books—the only science fiction listed in the card catalog—in the State Library in Lansing, Michigan. They gave me my basic education in Golden Age science fiction.

Looking through these books now—I'm fortunate enough to have all of them on my shelves today—I find they contained no fewer than 203 different sf stories. (I said they were big.) But of these 203 stories, it would seem that not a single one was by L. Ron Hubbard!

That was a bit shocking to realize, so I turned to the 1978 *Content Index to Science Fiction Anthologies and Collections* to determine exactly how many of Hubbard's short stories and novelets had been thought to deserve reprinting in book form, and how this might compare with the record of his fellow contributors to the Golden Age.

I threw out all single-author collections so that what was represented would be nothing but the stories that independent anthologists had respected enough to include in their books. And I did my best to count only stories originally written and published during the years that Hubbard wrote sf, from 1938 to 1950. Here's my tally:

Henry Kuttner/Lewis Padgett had the most stories reprinted and also appeared in the largest number of anthologies—49 stories in 83 books.

Robert Heinlein/Anson MacDonald had 26 stories in 75 books, almost three reprints per story.

A. E. van Vogt had 34 stories in 72 anthologies.

Theodore Sturgeon had 35 stories in 64 books.

Isaac Asimov had 21 stories in 58 books, including the most frequently anthologized story, "Nightfall," which appeared no less than fourteen times.

Clifford Simak had 18 stories in 39 anthologies.

Lester del Rey had 14 stories in 33 books.

Fritz Leiber had 18 stories in 30 books.

L. Sprague de Camp had 17 stories in 29 books.

How did L. Ron Hubbard compare with his peers? He had just eight stories anthologized, each of them reprinted once. Of these, just

five originally appeared in *Atounding or Unknown*.

Not a very impressive record. But then, to give Hubbard his due, we should remember that his strength was not his short fiction, but his longer work, his serials and short novels. So let us have a look at them, too, to see how they have fared.

These stories vary in quality. Some, like the 1939 serial, *General Swamp, C.I.C.*, under the name Frederick Engelhardt, and the 1947 serial *The End Is Not Yet*, have never been published in book form, and really don't deserve to be.

However, immediately after the war, in the period when mainstream New York publishers were concentrating on gathering anthologies of sf short stories, fan publishers like Gnome Press and Fantasy Press and Shasta had free rein to put of serial novels and single-author collections in hardcover form. And Hubbard did receive his share of these small press editions:

Hadley issued *Final Blackout*. Shasta published an expanded version of "Slaves of Sleep," a modern Arabian Nights adventure from *Unknown*. Gnome did *Fear and Typewriter in the Sky*. And Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc. of Los Angeles reprinted three Hubbard titles.

Having these half-dozen books in print did little to affect Hubbard's standing as an sf writer, however. At least, in June 1953, when *Atounding's* regular book review columnist, P. Schuyler Miller, published the results of a poll he had conducted among the magazine's readers—two lists of twenty-five books (with some overlap) that were considered to be illustrative of the development of sf, in one case, and the best modern science fiction in the other—there were titles by Campbell and Asimov, del Rey and de Camp, Ray Bradbury and "Doc" Smith, and three each by Heinlein and van Vogt. Many of these were fan press books. But no titles by L. Ron Hubbard were named.

During the early Fifties, I went beyond libraries and began to collect science fiction for myself. I was given a run of the postwar *Atounding*. Little by little, I bought all thirty-nine issues of *Unknown*. And I acquired all of the fan press Hubbard hardcovers. I had my chance to read all his work but his unreprinted prewar short fiction in *Atounding*.

My favorite Hubbard novel was his 1950 *Atounding* serial *To The Stars*—published in paperback by Ace in 1954 under the title *Return to Tomorrow*—with its bittersweet portrait of a young, long-suffering star traveler falling more and more out of touch with the Earth society he had been born into as a result of the time-dilation effect. When I got sent off to boarding school in 1956, I took the book along with me as part of my small traveling sf collection.

I also bought the Shasta edition of *Slaves of Sleep*. The story itself I found a spritely entertainment, though not completely coherent, but

I was deeply attached to the gorgeous dustjacket by Hannes Bok.

I tried to read *Final Blackout* more than once, and quit each time. The primary virtues of the story when it was first published were its timeliness and realism. But its timeliness hadn't survived the war, and realism wasn't what I was seeking in science fiction. To me, *Final Blackout* seemed dull and untranscendent.

Over the years, the sf collection I had built up got weeded and weeded again—and then married to another science fiction collection. What managed to survive by Hubbard—rather less than the work of any of his fellows from the Golden Age—was just three books: *Return to Tomorrow*, *Slaves of Sleep*, and *Fear and Typewriter in the Sky*. All the rest of Hubbard's work came to seem dispensable.

Sf readers a decade younger than I didn't have the same opportunities that I had had to read Hubbard's fiction. Even the best of it wasn't generally available for many years.

This was true even though the 1950s and '60s were a period when paperback houses like Ace, Pyramid, Berkley and Lancer were laboring to put large amounts of work from the pulps and fan presses into softcover form. During this time, Hubbard's stories were largely overlooked.

I checked Donald Tuck's 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy* to find out how many of Hubbard's novels and short novels had been considered worth reprinting in paperback in those decades, and found just two. Ace did *Return to Tomorrow* in 1954, at the beginning of the era of intensive reprinting, and Lancer issued *Slaves of Sleep* at the end of the period in 1967.

In the 1970s, Hubbard did fare somewhat better. He got a paperback story collection, at last. One softcover combined "Fear" and "The Ultimate Adventure," and a few years later another combined "Fear" and "Typewriter in the Sky," and *Slaves of Sleep* had a new edition from Dell. And Garland did *Final Blackout* and *Return to Tomorrow* in their series of limited hardcover reprint editions.

But in these years before Hubbard's late-in-life return to active sf writing, his early work didn't command much respect or attention from the science fiction community. In 1970, for instance, *Library Journal* published an annotated bibliography of classic sf compiled by me from books that had been named two or more times on separate lists made up by a broad spectrum of writers who were also scholars, critics, academics or librarians: James Blish, L. Sprague de Camp, Damon Knight, Andre Norton, Alexei Panshin, Joanna Russ, Robert Silverberg and Jack Williamson. And I regret to say that despite my lingering fondness for *Return to Tomorrow*, there was no book by Hubbard deemed basic enough by the group to make its way into this common bibliography of more than eighty titles.

The leading specialist in
SCIENCE FICTION
AND FANTASY LITERATURE



—catalogues issued—

L. W. Currey, Inc.

Box 187, Elizabethtown, NY 12932

(518) 873-6477

It was rare during these years for the fiction of L. Ron Hubbard to receive any notice at all. Perhaps the readiest example of this I can give is to turn to *Benchmarks*, a 350-page collection of book reviews by Algis Budrys originally published in *Galaxy* from 1964 to 1971.

When Lancer issued *Slaves of Sleep*, Budrys had an opportunity to review the book and didn't. Again, in 1970, he had his shot at the Berkley volume of *Fear and the Ultimate Adventure*, and he chose to overlook that book, too. In fact, search the index of Budrys' book though I may, I can only find two references to L. Ron Hubbard, both of them brief.

One of these was a fond memory of the old fan press hardcovers, which included "such interesting but idiosyncratic pieces as L. Ron Hubbard's *Final Blackout*."

The other was a suggestion that the novel *Earthblood* by Keith Laumer and Roal George Brown read to him "more like a combined effort of Robert Heinlein and L. Ron Hubbard than anything else that ever walked the bookstores in the quiet of the night." The points that he found Hubbardian seem to have been along the lines of galactic-*Übermensch*-with-secret-sorrows . . . which I am half-ashamed to recognize as a contributing factor to the emotional tonality of *Return to Tomorrow* which held such appeal for my long-ago teenage self.

Hubbard's latter-day work hasn't commanded great respect or attention, either. Its primary appeal has seemed to be to committed followers of Scientology rather than to regular readers of science fiction.

As an earnest reader of *Battlefield Earth*, I can say that I found it to be fast-moving pulp storytelling carried to wearying length. The book was very old-fashioned in its conceptions. It wasn't deep, and it was generally lacking in a sense of wonder.

There didn't seem to be much point in going on to *Mission Earth*. But nothing I have heard of it leads me to expect anything more impressive of it than sheer bulk—a kind of magnification of Hubbard's old-time role for Campbell as a filler of pages.

Summing all the evidence, then, it would seem that except for a period during World War II, when Hubbard made an impression on at least a number of fans and readers, there really hasn't been much of

anyone during these past fifty years who has been knowledgeable of or—whether writer, publisher, editor, critic, anthologist or fan—who has been prepared to claim L. Ron Hubbard as a science fiction writer of other than very minor importance. From *Rocket to the Morgue* in 1942 to *The World Beyond the Hill* in 1989, the opinion of independent observers has remained remarkably consistent on the subject of Hubbard's fiction.

At its most generous and sympathetic, this opinion would smile upon Hubbard's obvious intelligence, fecundity and charm, and be tempted to agree with Sam Moskowitz, writing in *Seekers of Tomorrow*, when he said, "One author who today might be rated with the giants of modern science fiction—with Heinlein, Sturgeon, van Vogt, and Asimov—if only he had continued to write, is L. Ron Hubbard."

But might-have-beens do not count, and potential in itself isn't sufficient to make a giant of science fiction. And in less wishful moments, if opinion has been ready to look with clear eyes upon the stories that Hubbard actually did manage to write and conclude regretfully, along with Damon Knight, that ultimately they must be reckoned "monuments to a prodigious talent, prodigally wasted."

If we judge from the accounts of those few people who knew him personally, it would seem that L. Ron Hubbard was a man adept at making a striking first impression, but who was not as impressive after the charm had worn off and the yarns he told were examined closely. And so it would also seem to be with the fiction he wrote.

All that I can advise to readers of today who might wish to judge the matter without reference either to fifty-year-old childhood memories or to the intervening history of reaction that I have sketched here, is that they try reading some of Hubbard's fiction, new or old, for themselves and make up their own minds about its merits. I have a certain confidence in the result.

And I don't think it will be necessary for Cory and me to radically revise *The World Beyond the Hill* on the subject of L. Ron Hubbard before it appears in paperback. ▴

Alcasi Panshin lives in Riegelwood, Pennsylvania.

Slam by Lewis Shiner

New York: Doubleday, 1990; \$17.95 hc; 240 pp.

reviewed by Charles Platt

The raw materials, here, are reminiscent of Philip K. Dick's "Crap Artist" period. We find numerous references to contemporary suburban America, a naive, ineffectual protagonist attempting to get some control over his erratic life; a sassy young woman who seduces him, more or less, a low-rent lifestyle; drug use; and a mildly comic scenario populated by a cast of misfits.

Dave (Shiner never gives him a full name) has emerged from jail on parole after serving six months for income-tax evasion. He's thirty-nine, rootless and aimless. A friend finds him a job looking after a recently-deceased old lady's house full of cats. Through a series of barely plausible chance encounters, Dave ends up having an affair with a teenager who lives in an abandoned mansion with a crowd of young runaways and misfits. Along the way, they introduce him to computer bulletin boards, anarchism, and skateboarding. By the time Dave's job falls apart, he's ready to turn his back on the conformist, "adult" world forever.

There's no speculative component to any of this. It's a social novel with a social message. Frustratingly, Shiner has chosen to convey this message via characters who are inarticulate, as if he fears that his readers might get impatient if he adopts a more educated or (god forbid!) literary tone. Some samples:

"Don't look to no government. They only out to cover they own ass. . . . All you got is you friends, your partners, whatever kind of networks you got."

"You see what they saying, there? [in a TV automobile commercial featuring a beautiful woman] They saying if you ain't got a Porsche you ain't shit. You want prime pussy like that, you got to have the bucks. People want to know what's

wrong with this country, there the answer is TV make you go fucking crazy."

"Sure things are shitty. . . . You ever been to Pasadena? You can't even breathe the air there, with all those refineries. . . . But you got to go on living. You can't sit around and cry because they cut down some trees and pave everything. Concrete is radical. Concrete is the future. You don't cry about it, man, you skate on it."

If this comes across as a somewhat superficial social analysis of twentieth-century America, rest assured that Shiner is quite serious about it. Dave's progressive process of enlightenment culminates in a *grasse-gedanken* that occurs while he is watching a skateboard competition. He finds himself deeply drawn to the unfashionable, independent nature of the sport (no glamorous cachet, no expensive equipment). It's a metaphor for an anarchist utopia: antimaterialistic, individualist, enriched by modern technology but never enslaved by it.

Underlining the message, Shiner includes an Author's Note telling us where to obtain handbooks such as *How to Start Your Own Country and Guerrilla Capitalism*. I've read these books, I'm familiar with the other references, and I'm even sympathetic to some of the ideals; but I find Shiner's portrayal of latter-day anarchism disappointingly shallow compared with the magazines being published by modern anarchist groups. I'm also puzzled that a writer with the rare ability to construct believable characters and workable, near-future scenarios should choose, instead, to dramatize his utopian arguments via a bunch of dead-end kids in present-day America.

To be fair, the social message is merely the subtext of this novel. It devotes most of its pages to situational humor and human interest. Each

The New York Review of Science Fiction 17

character is assigned a comic schtick: a lawyer who tells anti-lawyer jokes, a wealthy widow who recites lines memorized from fortune cookies, a UFO nut who wears plastic neckties, and a black ex-con murderer/dope dealer who tells Dave he should spend less time watching TV and more time reading books. The humor is conveyed with a reasonably light touch, and the characters are quite appealing. Shiner is a conscientious craftsman, and his prose is readable. But behind it all, there's a sense of contrivance. One senses that the characters seem likable because they have been consciously designed to seem likable.

This, then, is the fundamental difference between *Slam* and any novel by Philip K. Dick: Dick's people were not just quirky, not just

charming, but were possessed by longings as deep and conflicting as those of Dick himself. There was no contrivance, and seldom a message. His prose was less precise than Shiner's—at times, downright sloppy—but you could love it for the undisciplined life in it.

I can imagine people enjoying *Slam* and respecting the care that has gone into its creation, but I can't imagine anyone loving it. And ultimately Shiner's sermonizing may be hampered by his lack of affect. Even if his utopian vision of a rebellious underclass makes good theoretical sense (which I find doubtful), his lack of passion makes him rather an unpersuasive social evangelist.

Charles Platt resides in New York City.

Universe 1 edited by Robert Silverberg and Karen Haber

New York: Doubleday Foundation, 1990; \$8.95 tp; 450 pages

reviewed by Robert Killheffer

From at least the late sixties (picking up after Frederick Pohl's *Star Science Fiction* series of the fifties) through the mid-eighties, a number of outstanding original anthology series and their acclaimed editors prominently defined sf's leading edge: Damon Knight's *Orbit*, Robert Silverberg's *New Dimensions*, Michael Moorcock's *New Worlds Quarterly*, and Terry Carr's *Universe*. Carr's was the last survivor, and since his death in 1987, no comparable series has commanded the spotlight—the others had filtered earlier, and the few fledgling series, such as George Zebrowski's *Synergy* and the Bantam Spectra Editors' *Full Spectrum*, have not yet measured up in overall significance. Of similar modest length, *Synergy* never compiled as many literate, innovative, moving and memorable stories in each volume as Carr did in *Universe*; and the *Full Spectrum*, though featuring many excellent pieces, suffered from the many less-than-exceptional ones which made up the remainder of their nearly five hundred pages each.

So then came rumors that Robert Silverberg and Karen Haber had agreed to revive the *Universe* series. Great—Silverberg has always been a reliable and exciting anthologist, and was a regular contributor to Carr's *Universe* with his wife assisting, my hopes were high.

The first bad sign hit me right away, as I found the notice in the Spring 1990 catalogue: Doubleday's calling this one *Universe 1*. If they're picking up after Terry Carr, shouldn't it be eighteenth? But I ignored it; just a marketing ploy, I supposed—must judge the book by its contents, not its title.

Then I noticed the page count. Like Spectra's *Full Spectrum*, the new *Universe* runs to nearly five hundred pages, an ambitious and dangerous length for an original anthology (and twice the length of the old volumes). Could they all be gems? Hope may spring eternal, but experience makes pessimists of us all (or, at least, of me). I got my copy and approached it with trepidation.

There are twenty stories in the volume, each with a cogent and helpful introduction from Silverberg. A number of names ring bells—Bruce Sterling, James Patrick Kelly, Barry Malzberg, it seems *Universe* contributors such as Grania Davis and Kim Stanley Robinson, and even a new story from Ursula K. Le Guin. In this respect the new volume continues the old tradition, choosing interesting writers newer and older. Silverberg and Haber seem to have paid special attention to new writers. Eight of the pieces are from relative amateurs with at most a few sales—but what's truly astounding is that no fewer than four of them are first publications for their authors. It's rare to see that many new names in a whole year of one of the digests, let alone in a single anthology (except, of course, for *Writers of the Future* volumes). Perhaps, I thought before reading, they've unearthed that many authentic new talents; Carr's *Universe* featured some new writers, even the occasional first story, and many of those names have become major writers: Robinson, Shepard, Sterling. Besides, why else devote that much space to previously unpublished writers?

Stranger still is the organization of the stories. The first six run Kim Stanley Robinson, Geoffrey Landis, Ursula K. Le Guin, Paul Di Filippo, Barry Malzberg, and M. J. Engh—a half-dozen respected, recognizable names, and no novices. The middle seven mix it up some, with well-knowns such as Scott Baker, Bruce Sterling, and James Patrick Kelly

alongside the likes of John M. Landsberg, Gregor Hartmann, and Richard R. Smith—writers with a number of previous sf dates, dating from as far back as 1954, but no significant reputations in the field. The final seven stories are the work of greener hands, including all the first-timers and such as Augustine Funnell and Jamil Nasir, who have a couple of recent credits each. I've never seen such a structure in an anthology, proceeding roughly from the most recognized to the least, and I cannot say what the editors hoped to gain by it. I don't think it was wise. Although the last story, "Daniel's Labyrinth" by Damian Kilby, is the strongest of the novice tales and one of the better pieces in the book, and so makes a decent finish, the latter 150 pages or so are dominated by an unpolished, and sometimes unreadable, amateur flavor—witness K. Hernandez-Brun's "1099 A.G.E." A representative passage: "The Lir is P. P. ES. The Lir is SEP. P is P of Ocadinis. Ocadinis uphold the Lir. Ocadinis are Archetypes" (pg. 414). Similarly facile is Francis Valery's "BUMPIE™," a confusing and tedious attempt to wed computer code to prose. I can understand the desire to include experimental forms, but this story's shifting and chaotic point-of-view problems take it beyond experimental to incomprehensible. In his introduction, Silverberg promises to honor Carr's criteria in his selections: stories that are "intellectually challenging, strongly plotted, and gracefully written" (p. xi). Brun's and Valery's may meet the first, but they do no justice to the other two. The couple of promising pieces by newer writers—"River of the Dying" by Augustine Funnell, and Jamil Nasir's "The Book of St. Farris"—offer hope for the future but cannot make up for the others. But for Kilby's story, one might finish *Universe 1* feeling confused, dismayed, and a bit disgusted. It would have been better, if they must include such as "BUMPIE™," to intermingle them with the more professional work.

So, back to the beginning. There has been lots of discussion recently over what dominant sensibility will replace '80s "cyberpunk"; and while no answer will be evident until it's all over and done, perhaps we can see a glimpse of something here. The style and matter of the stories in the present *Universe* volume are as varied as in any of Carr's, yet we can detect a recurring theme—communication between alien minds. Leading off, Kim Stanley Robinson's "The Translator" is a mildly sardonic, engaging tale in which two vastly different races meet on a desolate world which has recently been colonized by humans; Rumford, running a trading post there, has to find a way in his role as interpreter to forestall the ritual war in the offing. "The Translator" is not the equal of Robinson's best work, "The Blind Geometer" or "The Lucky Strike" (from *Universe 14*), but it is competent and entertaining, a good start and, in the context of this theme, appropriate.

John M. Landsberg's "And of the Earth, a Womb," though a bit long and talky, takes up this topic with a more serious tone. The Earth is besieged by mysterious aliens who fall from space in droves. The military has learned to kill them while they fall, and seems to be holding its own; meanwhile, Zan McManus, Air Force officer and former fighter pilot, is obsessed with capturing one of the aliens and learning to communicate with it. He succeeds, and in the process learns the secret to stopping the invasion (which, it seems, is not intended as aggression but is the result of radically differing forms of biology and psychology).

On the whole, the difficulties of communication between such alien minds is handled fairly well, but the climactic scene, in which McManus attempts to reconcile some of the differences, seems contrived—he doesn't ask the most telling questions, or express himself as well as we might hope—and ends with little success. Not perfect, but not bad.

Stoney Compton's first published story, "Whalesong," runs in a similar vein. Here, a troubled, telepathic Eskimo boy, Simon, bonds with a telepathic whale in a post-war future (human population is down, but we don't know much more about the circumstances outside of the Arctic). A bit slow but interesting for the first half, the story takes a sudden and implausible turn as Simon crashes his kayak near a remote village and uses his powers to dominate it. It moves now in fast-forward, with little attempt to develop the characters or justify Simon's actions; and the end adds nothing, as the whale returns to save his Eskimo friend from just retribution. Simon's victims are forgotten, and the episode treated with no more gravity than a boyish prank. "Would Simon be able to avoid entangling them both in trouble? Time to think about that later. They had far to go. There would be enough heartbeats to find answers" (pg. 303). What do you want to bet Compton is planning a novel about these characters, with that ending?

A couple of other stories relate to the alien communication theme less openly: Le Guin's "The Shobies' Story" and Kilby's "Daniel's Labyrinth." Le Guin's tale of an abortive venture into faster-than-light speed confronts the problem of the sickness of other humans' minds. Trapped outside of normal space-time, the travelers find that each of them perceives reality differently, creating chaos and panic; to save themselves and return, they must communicate their perceptions, share them to create a common reality. It's a beautifully-written reflection on the human process of inventing reality and the observer-dependent universe, about the need to share with and connect to other, alien human minds.

Damian Kilby offers us a tale with a similar theme. Human survivors of a nuclear holocaust are taken aboard a mysterious alien vessel for no clear purpose, left wandering the tunnels with other insentient species. There they slowly recreate human society, and learn to live with the aliens, if only by avoiding them. They set out to explore and understand their new world, banding together to combat the mystery and seeming anarchy of their environment. Kilby's story has the most tenuous link to the alien communication theme, but it is there; he stresses the importance of peaceful society among the humans, and while the various species (humans, curies, beetles, and boogers) pursue their own logic and purposes, seeming to make no sense to each other, they can coexist as long as they learn to accept each others' ways. The narrator, Daniel, learns how to avoid and deter the boogers without killing them, the beetles cause no harm if left alone, and the curies

may not be of any help to the humans but neither do they threaten.

This concern for communication and tolerance, linked in the Le Guin and Kilby stories to the whole process of peaceful human coexistence, seems clearly the result of the many interracial and intercultural tensions still plaguing our world, despite the many recent steps toward mutual understanding between the superpowers. Perhaps this is the sort of thing writers will find interesting in the coming decade: a movement away from the cult of the individual, the hostile or non-existent human relationships found in works called "cyberpunk."

The post-punk nature of this new *Universe* is evident in many of the other stories as well. Paul DiFilippo's "One Night in Television City" is a parody of c.p. tropes and attitudes. Geoffrey Landis' "The City of Ultimate Freedom" offers a lively and (rare, these days) positive vision of humanity in a computer-controlled utopia, reaffirming the enabling human need for struggle and the beneficial effects of even slight hopes of change—hopes commonly absent from the works of c.p. Far from those dystopian visions of human-machine interrelation, Landis shows how, even in a machine-run world, it can be symbiosis.

Perhaps surprisingly, Bruce Sterling's "The Shores of Bohemia" rejects the burnt-out individualism of much of '80s *neofut*. It's an evocative and perplexing tale—I'm not always sure what exactly is going on—but the central story of the generations-long construction of the gigantic "Enantiodrome" offers powerful imagery and, metaphorically, a condemnation of those who would codify and restrict artistic endeavor, who would regulate the creation of culture according to their own individual plans. In one tremendous outpouring of mob interest and energy, the populace as a whole takes over the construction, shattering the carefully-laid plans of the master architect and the ancient designers, but producing in the process something more meaningful and powerful for everyone.

Perhaps, then, the new *Universe* will be the venue to watch for the next wave. Perhaps it will become the leading edge of sf in the '90s. Its present difficulties seem to stem from imprudent planning—the arrangement of the stories should distribute styles, tones, topics and talents more evenly; and, more importantly, it might be better to offer fewer stories and fewer pages. The theory behind this incarnation of *Universe* and such projects as *Full Spectrum* seems to be that of the shotgun, discharging a whole mass of bullets at once, hoping at least a few hit the mark, rather than relying on proper and careful aim. Carr was a marksman, dead-on most of the time in his *Universe*. There are enough high-quality pieces in this volume to fill one of the old, and Silverberg's aim has been demonstrated before (for instance, in *New Dimensions*), but his selections here are not always on target. If the editors and publishers could consent to a book half this size, this series could become the backbone of short sf it ought to be. ▲

John Shirley

A Response to David Myers re: The Clarion Credo

David E. Myers' piece is very intelligently written and thoughtful and it's possible Richard Grant and I deserve it. I probably deserve it, anyway, as I did poke a stick or two at what I called The Clarion/Milford Standard, and this apparently provided something like nuclei for Grant's hallucinations.

Like Grant's piece, I think it's basically right-on. Most of the field suffers from slumped standards. It was probably unfair of us to label the weak stuff The Clarion/Milford Standard or the Clarion Credo, since both writers' workshops offer some excellent teachers (or in the case of Milford, excellent peers). Myers was quite right to quote such fine Clarion teachers as Roger Zelazny, Lucius Shepard, Greg Bear and Ed Bryant, and the others he mentioned as well. They do indeed encourage novice writers to push out the boundaries, to become something more than what the "Credo" would require of them.

But.

There are many more Clarion/Milford teachers than these. Writers—and editors. The editors/teachers, I suspect, are especially prone to bland advice, to encouraging safe, generic writing. Many of the writer teachers too are probably guilty of promoting dull, workmanlike standards.

Also, the highlights of a course, or the more transcendent moments of it, are not necessarily what you carry away with you as the tools of your

craft. Such moments are not necessarily what most of the instruction is comprised of. The meaty stuff between can be pretty overwhelming, day after day. That's how I remember it: moments like those described by Myers now and then, but the rest of the time the workshop predominantly focusing on the simplified common denominators of mediocre writing.

And then there's the influence of the rest of the class, at Clarion, on any individual writer. Unless the teacher has a pretty fierce light of leadership, students tend—in the process of workshoping—to mill out the individuality in many writers. They tend to encourage one another toward an unthreatening genre-oriented mediocrity.

To be fair, one of the things Clarion is pre-eminently there for is to teach you *to sell*. To get money for your work. And as a full time writer, who got his start at Clarion, I applaud that. I'm grateful for it. Indeed, I can quite honestly and seriously state that Clarion saved me from a life of crime by teaching me how to write commercially. It gave me an alternative. And teaching a writer how to sell involves focusing again and again on some pretty basic stuff, like "well-rounded characterization." This is especially true for the many writers in any workshop who will inevitably be, or, of limited ability. The most they can hope for—and will be delighted to achieve—is selling some easily-marketable, safely-mediocre genre novel. This quickly becomes evident at

Clarion and at any other workshop, an one automatically and justly commends such people to something like the "Clarion Credo."

One of the conflicts I had with Clarion and Milford (and I didn't have many... I did quite well there, and learned many useful things...) was with the tendency of teachers and peers to insist you produce protagonists who are "likeable" to the great mass of people. Who are "sympathetic" characters. What is good commercial advice is often also good artistic advice—but not on this issue. Characters should be, in my opinion, those who are suited for the story, whether they are people you can sympathize with, or not.

Writers like Shepard (one of the best short story writers on the globe in any genre) will probably not insist on "sympathetic" characters. But on the whole one is pressured in that direction at Clarion/Milford.

It may well be that Grant and I maligned many fine Clarion teachers. In fact, with my clumsy generalization, I'm quite sure I did maligned them—and hereby apologize. After this response piece, I won't take the name in vain again. But Myers is being too literal minded. It's not really about Clarion. It's about Science Fiction. The general thrust of my thesis stands, and I think the same goes for Grant's extensive extrapolation of it.

I'll leave it to Grant to reply to the bulk of Myers' piece. I'll say only that I welcome Myers' comments, and I think this whole discussion is a very commendable exercise, the kind of exercise that encourages growth.

John Shirley's most recent novel is *Eclipse* Corona.

Greg Cox

Excerpts from *The Transylvanian Library: A Consumer's Guide to Vampire Fiction*

BRANDON, MARY ELIZABETH

"Good Lady Duycayne" (UK: *The Strand*, February 1896: 33 pp.)

A latter-day Elizabeth Bathory prolongs her life (if not her youth) with regular blood transfusions from young ladies she hires as companions, none of whom lasts very long. An invalid herself, she is assisted by an unscrupulous Italian physician.

Ancestral forgettable story, but one of the first attempts to update the vampire myth.

STOKER, BRAM

Dracula (UK: A. Constable & Co., 1897: 390 pp.)

The Lady of the Shroud (UK: Rider, 1909: 287 pp.)

"Dracula's Guest" (UK: Routledge, 1914: 20 pp.)

If any book in this Library can justly be labeled "Required Reading," *Dracula* is it, if for no other reason than because so many subsequent stories and novels are sequels, prequels, parodies, or simple rip-offs of this one particular volume. Even further, *Dracula* has influenced the creation of every vampire story that has come after it. An example: *Salem's Lot* by Stephen King, specifically described by the author as his "literary homage" to Bram Stoker.

We'll talk about the movies later.

It is an intimidating prospect, I admit, to begin a new discussion of *Dracula*. Whole books have been devoted to analyzing this novel, and enough has been written to generate some blatantly contradictory interpretations. Columnist Joseph Sobran, for instance, tells us that *Dracula* is "a long cautionary tale about the modern world—a warning that there are evils our 'sophistication' mustn't blind us to... England's modern science is impotent against a pre-modern evil." The aforementioned Stephen King, on the other hand, says of the same book: "Knowledge and technology are not the evils here but the saviors. The enemy is a sinister, crafty, and ancient vampire, symbol of all the ancient superstitions of mankind. The remedy is not much more than the scientific method, enthusiastically applied."

This is the sort of critical infighting that one associates with classics.

Okay, okay, you say. Granted that Stoker had an impact, is there any point to reading him today? After all, we all know the basic plot, don't we? Jonathan Harker, an English solicitor visiting an old castle in the mountains of Transylvania, discovers that his host, Count Dracula, is a vampire. Later, after the Count has traveled to Victorian England in search of fresh hunting grounds, young Lucy Westenra is mysteriously drained of blood and life, only to be reborn as an undead seductress. Finally, in the concluding portion of what is essentially a three-part story, Harker joins a handful of heroic individuals, led by Dr. Abraham Van Helsing, in a private war against the cunning vampire—and if you did not know the story before, you surely do now. So, once again: Is *Dracula* worth reading?

Yes. Emphatically.

Oh, it is true that the book, like *Varney the Vampire*, is probably overlong. And God knows why Stoker saw fit to load the story with a small army of heroes, giving the unfortunate Lucy no less than *three* would-be husbands. And given that they are all irreproachably decent and polite, the text does sometimes read like the minutes of Dr. Van Helsing's Mutual Admiration Society.

Still, chances are you won't notice any of this on your first reading. I still remember my first time through *Dracula*, eagerly turning the pages every chance I got, returning to the real world only under protest, continually worrying about what was happening to poor Jonathan in those creepy Carpathian Mountains. At the age of twelve, after viewing countless vampire flicks on Channel Seven's "Nightmare Theatre," Stoker's great adventure still got to me. Four hundred pages is a long way for a sixth-grader, but I read the last pages sadly, disappointed that there was no more.

There's just so much good stuff in *Dracula*: the whole stay at Castle Dracula where the danger grows daily, the forbidden chamber of Dracula's brides, the doomed voyage of the good ship *Demeter* (which stands on its own as a fine short thriller), the battle of wits between Dracula and the mortals, and Renfield, the lunatic with the unnerving dietary habits. Stoker's Renfield is disturbing; it's too bad that most film versions tend to treat the character as comic relief. There is a horrible, warped logic to all that fly-eating, and hints of a once-intelligent mind gone badly askew.

One can easily see the influence of Varney and Carmilla and Von Klatka in the plot, but Stoker improves on the old vampires in many ways. Dracula can become a wolf, or a bat, or a mist. He encourages the innocent to drink his own tainted blood. Most importantly, perhaps, Dracula remains dangerous even after his secret is exposed. He is a Creature of Hell like all the others, but much harder to kill.

Perhaps we have the historical Dracula to thank for this vampire's extra layer of menace. As Van Helsing himself observes: "That mighty brain and that iron resolution went with him to his grave, and are even now arrayed against us."

One warning, though: The Count himself remains offstage for long periods at a time, more so than in most subsequent Dracula adventures. In the second part of the novel, *The Destruction of Lucy Westenra*, he is nearly invisible. This could be frustrating to readers accustomed to more extroverted vampires.

Like Lord Ruthven before him, Count Dracula was soon brought to life on stage. There have been several different adaptations, but the most successful is the original play by Hamilton Deane and John Baskerton, based closely on Stoker's story. This version emphasizes the contest of wits between Dracula and Van Helsing. It also, inexplicably, switches the names of the two heroines, turning Lucy into Mina and vice versa, with the result that subsequent adaptations have made the same mistake.

In recent years, musical versions keep being produced, yielding such shows as *Out for the Count*, *Dracula* and the abominable *Dracula, Baby*. The definitive vampire songfest has yet to be composed, I think.

And then, of course, there are the movies....

According to a feature in *USAToday*, the Count is second only to Sherlock Holmes in number of film appearances. He's probably gaining too; there haven't been many Holmes movies lately. Without even counting the sequels, parodies, and imitations, there have been over a dozen genuine adaptations of the original novel. They are:

Noferatu (1922), with Max Schreck as Dracula.

Dracula (1931), with Bela Lugosi. Based on the play.

Dracula in Istanbul (1953), with Atif Kaptan

Dracula (1957), a TV version with John Carradine.

Dracula (1958), with Christopher Lee.

US title: *Horror of Dracula*.

The Bad Flower, a Korean remake of *Horror of...*

Count Dracula, a British TV version with Denholm Elliott.

Jonathan (1970), a German political allegory.

Count Dracula (1970), with Lee again.

Dracula (1973), a TV movie with Jack Palance.

Dracula (1973), a Canadian TV version with Norman Walsh

Dracula (1975), in sign language for deaf audiences.

Count Dracula (1979), a British TV version with Louis Jourdan.

Dracula (1979), with Frank Langella. Based on the play.

Noferatu the Vampire (1979), with Klaus Kinski.

Of these films, the one with Jourdan follows the book most closely, though even it excised one of Lucy's suitors.

Finally, a chapter edited out of *Dracula* at some point was eventually published in 1914 as "Dracula's Guest" and has remained in print ever since. It describes Jonathan's brief encounter with another vampire, the Countess Dolingen of Styria.

"Vampire stories are generally located in Styria. . . ."

Until now.

See also: ALLEN, BAKER, BISCHOFF, CAMPBELL, CARTER, CHETWYND-HAYES, DANIELS (PHILIP), DRAKE (ASA), ESTLEMAN, GARDEN, GEARE/CORBY, JOHNSON, KAYE, KIMBERLY, LEE, LEVY, LORY, MATHESON (RICHARD), McDANIEL, MCKEAN, MONETTE, PARRY, RANDOLPHE, RITCHIE, RUDORFF, RYAN, SABERHAGEN, SAMUELS, SHIRLEY, TREMAYNE, WELLMAN.



Last and definitely least, there's *The Lady of the Shroud*, which is not as sequel to *Dracula*, but rather a turgid, overwrought melodrama about an alleged vampiress. It gets off to a good, eerie start, with the crew of a steamship spotting what appears to be a ghostly woman, clad in the ceremonies of the grave, standing up in a coffin afloat upon the waves. After that, however, things grow steadily less compelling. . . .

Rupert Sent Leger, a steadfast young Englishman, inherits a castle in the Land of the Blue Mountains, a small Balkan nation. There he meets and falls in love with the mysterious Lady of the Shroud, who to all indications is a member of the living dead. Interestingly, this does not stop Rupert from marrying her, shroud and all. Shortly thereafter, and only a little past the middle of the book, the Lady turns out to be none other than the Voivodina Teuta, only daughter of the Voivode of the Blue Mountains, and a mortal woman constrained to impersonate a vampire due to convoluted matters of politics and plot.

Not only does *The Lady of the Shroud* lack a true vampire, it's also missing nearly all the energy and vivid horrors of *Dracula* and some of Stoker's better short stories. Once Teuta abandoned her Undead charade, in fact, I found it almost impossible to keep reading.

The Count lives on. The Lady is deservedly forgotten.



The post-*Dracula* era of vampire literature started slowly, especially at longer lengths. Short stories continued to appear regularly, but these seldom deviated from one classic pattern: innocent souls fall victim to a "mysterious" evil, until the vampire is exposed and destroyed. The heroes invariably ended up in a graveyard, staking a well-preserved corpse with blood-stained lips. See, for instance: LORING, CRAWFORD (F.M.), ROMAN, JACOBI, SCOTT-MONTGRIEF.

The vampire novel came even closer to extinction. For decades, no

The New York Review of Science Fiction Readings at Dixon Place

Beginning September 19, Dixon Place will host a Fall series of speculative fiction readings presented by *The New York Review of Science Fiction*. On the third Wednesday of every month from September through December (second Wednesday of November), two writers will read from their works in the informal, comfortable atmosphere of Dixon Place. Readers will include many of the leading writers of imaginative fiction.

September 19

Jack Womack

Terry Bisson

October 17

Susan Palwick

Samuel R. Delany

November 14

Joan D. Vinge

Ellen Kushner

December 19

Michael Swanwick

James Morrow

READINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

Admission: \$4.98. Seating is limited.

Time: 8:00 p.m. (doors open at 7:30)

Refreshments are available.

For more information contact Ellie Covan at (212) 673-6752
or Gordon Van Gelder at (212) 674-5151 x735

Dixon Place • 37 E. First St. (between First and
Second Avenues) • New York, NY 10003

one even tried to do Stoker one better. Instead, we got merely a couple of books in which the trappings of vampirism were used to spice up exercises in other genres: murder mysteries, science fiction, sword-and-sorcery, etc. There was, for example, *Farewell Miss Julie Logan* (1932) by James Barrie, a spoof of religious prejudice in which a Scotch minister falls in love with a vampire, but is horrified to discover she is a Papist! Even Bram Stoker got into the act with *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909) in which the heroine is mistaken for a vampire, prior to lots of straightforward swashbuckling. See also: CARL, FORTUNE, NICOLSON, WILLIAMSON.

The rise of the American pulp magazines (such as *Weird Tales*) eventually produced an explosion of classic horror stories, but the vampire novel would not come snarling back to life until at least the 1950s. In the meantime, there was always. . . .

HERON, E. and H. (Pseudonyms of Hesketh and Kate Prichard)
"The Story of Baelbreow" (UK: *Pearson's Magazine*, April 1898: 14 pp.)

Some detectives specialize in divorce cases, insurance claims, or even premeditated murder. The occult detectives, a staple of popular fiction since god-knows-when, prefer mysteries that defy rational explanation even after they're solved, in which the question is often not *whodunnit*, but *what?* There have been many such investigators over the years, and they've all run into vampires eventually.

"Baelbreow" first appeared as part of a series of stories featuring supernatural sleuth Flaxman Low. This time around, Low must figure

out why the harmless, insubstantial ghost of an old English manor has suddenly started attacking people and sucking their blood. Ultimately, it is revealed that the vampiric spirit has animated the old Egyptian mummy recently established in the household museum (where all the attacks took place). The ghost-mummy-vampire is first shot, then cremated.

A curiosity, mostly, that rather perversely tries to apply deductive logic to an essentially irrational situation—as if a walking mummy was so much more plausible than a ghost with teeth!

For other occult detectives, see: ASKEW, QUINN, RICE (JEFF), SAXON, SHERMAN, WELLMAN.



WATSON, H.B.

"The Stone Chamber" (*The Heart of Miranda*, 1899: 27 pp.)

Strange things happen to those who spend the night in one particular chamber of Marvyn Abbey, ancestral home of an infamous clan that perished long ago under mysterious circumstances. The tenant and his guests suffer unaccountable weakness, marks on their throats. Worse still, the chamber seems to bring about unsavory changes in its victim's personalities. Perfect gentlemen find themselves drinking to excess, gambling, and making lewd advances towards their fiancées... (Horror!)

A haunted abbey? Demonic possession? In fact, the stone chamber is simply connected by a secret tunnel to the Crypt of the Marys, where a bat-like Undead is ultimately destroyed by fire.

A mostly familiar collection of Gothic devices, with a notably Victorian code of morality. The emphasis here is less on the inevitable bloodloss than the threat of spiritual corruption. Vampirism as a contagious form of The Seven Deadly Sins.



LORING, F.G.

"The Tomb of Sarah" (UK: *The Pall Mall Magazine*, 1900: 80 pp.)

An evil Countess is released from a tomb near Bristol. A textbook case of what we might label the Standard Early Vampire Story: a Creature of Hell preys with impunity upon the innocent, until someone puts a stick through a suspicious corpse. Only minor variations in style and setting distinguish this one from "Carmilla" and many more to follow.



NISBET, HUME

"The Vampire Maid" (*Stories Weird and Wonderful*, 1900: 7 pp.)

"The Old Portrait" (*Stories Weird and Wonderful*, 1900: 5 pp.)

"Maid" is a rather mild, almost charming boy-meets-vamp story. A young man vacationing in the English countryside moves into a cottage shared by a middle-aged woman and her beautiful daughter. Our hero's infatuation with the pale Ariadne grows in direct proportion to his ever-increasing lassitude, but he wakes one night to catch her red-lipped—and runs screaming into the night. Ariadne's sweet-heart gets off much easier than most, obviously, but then again how many other *femmes fatales* have to drug their victims to keep them quiet, and drink from a vein in the arm? How terribly unsexy!



"The Old Portrait" is more intriguing, though its moral is simple: Don't keep paintings of vampires in your room at night, lest they step off the canvas and kiss you as you sleep. And then:

"The picture and frame were still on the easel, only as I looked at them the portrait had changed, a hectic flush was on the cheeks while the eyes glittered with life and the sensuous lips were red and ripe-looking with a drop of blood still upon the nether one. In a frenzy of horror I seized my scarping knife and slashed out the vampire picture. . . ."

The basic idea here (of specters emerging from portraits) is borrowed from *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole, but it works well with the vampire twist.



FREEMAN, MARY WILKINS

"Luella Miller" (1902: 17 pp.)

Is Luella a vampire? On the face of it, she doesn't exhibit any of the characteristics we've come to expect. She doesn't drink blood, she walks about in daylight, she's not even a Countess. And yet she drains her friends and loved ones as surely as any thirsty *nosferatu*. Simply by radiating charm and helplessness, the ingenious Luella somehow compels people to take care of her (tend her house, support her, fix her meals, and so on). A variety of volunteers, young and old, male and female, become her devoted servants and, quite literally, work themselves to death on her behalf.

What shall we make of this Psychic Vampire? At what point does an unusually dominating (or dependent) personality cross over into the realm of supernatural horror? Luella Miller is the first such to creep into this Library, but she will not be the last. (See also: BLACKWOOD, DICK, FARBER, KORNBLUTH, LEIBER, MATHESON (RICHARD CHRISTIAN), MOORE, WILSON, VIERECK.) All have been judged and identified on a case-by-case basis.

On its own terms, the story of Luella is an intriguing portrait of the vampire as spoiled child, social parasite, and unknowing murderer, set not in Transylvania but in a small American township. Oddly enough, Luella seems genuinely unaware of her crimes. Vampirism comes naturally to her "... like a baby with scissors in its hand, cuttin' everybody without knowin' what it was doin'."

(After years of relative obscurity, the story has lately been reprinted in both *Vamps* and *Vampires*. See Bibliography.)



BARING-GOULD, SABINE

"A Dead Finger" (*A Book of Ghosts*, 1904: 15 pp.)

"Folk once called us Anarchists, Nihilists, Socialists, Levelers, now they call us the Influenza. The learned talk of microbes, and bacilli, and bacteria. Microbes, bacilli, and bacteria be blowed! We are the Influenza; we the social failures, the generally discontented, coming up out of our cheap and nasty graves in the form of physical disease. . . ."

More specifically, this bitter vampiric spirit escaped his coffin in the form of his last remaining finger, all the rest of his remains having rotted away. Gradually, though, he began to reconstruct his body by attaching, leech-like, to the body of the narrator, a prosperous Britisher, and consuming its victim's life force. A savvy electrician(!) arrives just in time to defuse this deadly circuit, and expose the vampire as "moral, social, political discontent in another form" and a form of negative energy to boot.

Despite the vivid image of the Undead finger dragging its ectoplasmic body behind as it burrows into the narrator's ribs, "A Dead Finger" hasn't aged very well. What horror there is eventually gets buried beneath bad science and heavy-handed political conservatism. I suppose, given the genre's fondness for pernicious aristocrats, that it's only fair to occasionally blame vampirism on trade unions and the unemployed, but a distribe this unuseful is easy to dislike.



Screed

(Letters of Comment)

Virginia Kidd, Millford, PA

By a masterpiece of indirection, since there is a well-enough organized letter from Robert A. Collins in your most recent issue, I would like to address him, so to speak, *c/o NYRSF*. The sentence I want to call him on appeared in the April issue of the *SFRA Newsletter*, but May and June just appeared in my mail box and it would probably be next year before Feedback fed back. Whereas, if I make my point in your columns (with your kind permission), I can nail his misstatement in a public forum within at least a half-year of its perpetration.

What Robert A. Collins said was: "Packagers are legion. . . . We have series like 'Isaac Asimov Presents' and dozens of 'in the world of' series, all capitalizing on name recall among fans, all of them lousy, all of them selling well because the fans don't know shit from Shinola."

That may be true of some fans, but it is certainly not true of all fans, and is not only derogatory but rude. Robert A. Collins apparently does not know, also, packagers from a genuine, first-class, award-winning editor like Gardner Dozois. The books Gardner bought for the Isaac Asimov Presents series were probably all of them good; I represented only Judith Moffett in the sale of her *Penniers*; I believe there were seven books all told, before Congdon & Weed/Contemporary Books pulled the rug out from under Dozois, without waiting to see if it was a viable series. (It might well have been. It takes longer than that to determine, as at least one among NYRSF's editors vividly knows from a slightly different instance, the magazine *Cosmos*, drowned virtually at birth, and the excellent but murdered *Timescape* line.)

If Robert A. Collins did not mean his "all . . . all . . . all . . ." clauses to refer to anything but the "in the world of" series, he should not have used them in that sentence with its compound noun. He has managed to denigrate not only Gardner Dozois, but also John Barnes, Neal Barrett Jr., Steve Popkes, David J. Skal, Harry Turtledove, Andrew Weiner, and the above-mentioned Judith Moffett. In his next paragraph, he says, "Consider a ranty, a new writer who is also a true artist. . . ." and does not seem to be aware that he has just whopped seven new writers striving to be true artists over the head with a shoeshine box full of Shinola.

"What Can a Thoughtful Man Hope for Science Fiction on this Earth, Given the Experience of the Past Decade?"—Better than this abuse, Bob.

Taras Wolansky, Jersey City, New Jersey

I don't know why Donald Keller is so worked up about Orson Scott Card's praise of "plain storytelling." Whenever a professional writer makes a statement about what good writing consists of, check to see if he isn't simply describing his own work, as he sees it.

So Card talks about plain storytelling; Benford talks about playing with the "net up"; Judith Tarr talks about understanding medieval history; John Lippick (in a notorious review), of the "quietest realistic fiction" versus "the vacuity of extraterrestrial space."

[Your point is well-taken; but. The reason I got so 'worked up' (and I did) was that Card seems to argue that any right-thinking person would naturally agree with him, and that people such as I do not exist. Also, this is far from the first time I've had to make this particular argument.—DGK]

David Bratman, Menlo Park, California

Unfortunately, I don't remember who (some years ago, I expect) said this, but Justin Leiber should find it apropos:

"Sex is not illegal. Writing about sex is. Murder is illegal. Writing about murder is not."

And with that succinct indictment of an attitude that's still easy to find ringing in our ears, I'll change subjects and remark to Jessica Salmonson that I am one of those readers who have given up on

Michael Shea's *Niff* the *Lean* somewhere around page 8. Not once, but twice; both times after being spurred to open the thing by being told that it's a really good book. Will the third time be lucky? I infer that Jessica would counsel me to skip the introductory dribblings altogether.

Gloria Wall, Panorama City, California

My brother has been picking up copies of your magazine at the local specialty shop (Dangerous Visions) and I have been enjoying it so much that I feel I really ought to subscribe. I acquired a taste for this sort of thing in college and have been missing it since. We have managed to get hold of all the back issues except for the very first. Do you have back issues? I would very much like to see the beginning of Susan Palwick's "Teenage Crud Fan" (especially since she has been one of my very favorite authors from her first published story (the preceding included in case bothering people up is more likely to get me my magazine)). It would also be nice to find out what the "spherical cow" routine is about.

Although issue ten has been quite a while ago, since I am writing anyway I feel I should point out an error of fact in Jessica Amanda Salmonson's article about *The Ship Who Sang*. Salmonson says that Helva's final partner sees her as "a perfect beauty as epitomized by a pin-up girl, which has been Central World's map for gender structuring." In fact, Parolan's picture of Helva is nothing of the kind, but specifically stated to be a "chromosomal extrap", which surely must be an extrapolation of what Helva would have looked like. Although I agree with Salmonson that the gender relations in McCallrey's work are psychologically unhealthy, there is no internal evidence to suggest that shell-people are assigned gender arbitrarily, and I find it unlikely that a culture with the strong gender-role expectations Salmonson postulates would do so. I would have liked to see some discussion of non-ship-shell-people also; the more prominent one in the book is male, runs a city, and supports Helva's attempts to escape bureaucratic slavery while wistfully envying her ability to pick up and leave.

In any case, I hope your magazine continues for a good long time. I really enjoy the mix of things you publish, especially the off-beat humor which enlivens the whole without getting in the way of serious discussion (as former linguistics students, my husband and I particularly appreciated Ford's dingbat translations).

I just got my number 20, and read Platt's article with great interest. The kind of fiction he describes sounds like it would be fun to write, but I would probably hate to read it, since I'm one of those people who reads magazines straight through (and therefore occasionally think nasty thoughts in your collective direction because I manage to forget an entire article until my brother says "did you read the one about . . .?"). I think it's rather sad to say that we have to invent fiction that encourages low attention span and refusal to surrender oneself to the experience. And surely movies are even more linear and passive than novels. In any case, it's hard to imagine how anything other than the illusion of control can be provided by even the kind of hypermedia Platt describes. If you want actual control of your fictionalizing experience, go find a good role-playing game. There are times, however, when I'd like to have hyper-texted features built into the book I'm reading (what page was that prophesy on, anyway?).

Alexei Panshin, Rigisville, Pennsylvania

I didn't know about the *Locus* poll—one of the advantages of no longer subscribing. More nerve-shattering, however, was the fact that my rock 'n' roll bit was not recognized as humor—and that you haven't taken the hint and continue to run Paul's bits.

[We keep running Paul Williams' pieces because it amuses us to do so. We ran your piece, however, because we thought it was funny.—DGH]

From the Mud

All life on this planet evolved from ocean dwellers, some scientists tell us. If so, then I (with my air-breathing lungs) imagine life went swimmingly in the deep blue. On the fringe of the oceans, in the muck and ooze, where those who once knew the deep life were trapped—ah, things were interesting there. Beings fought for survival, for each breath. Life was unrewarding, nearly-impossible to eke out. Writers' advances didn't pay a month's rent and slime.

A drastic change in climate—affordable computer technology—has begun to evaporate the publishing ocean. Transferral, storage, and reproduction of text have all changed enough to raise the temperature significantly in the past decade; the typesetting abilities of computers have drawn another element of publishing back into the atmosphere. The pond shrinks, and while lonely life in the cold cold deep huddles together, in the sludge the small press strives to breathe.

While time alone can show which new publishers will gain their feet, I feel certain that today's small press will lead the way into tomorrow. Earthworks Press remains my paragon, a publisher in California whose *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth* has climbed the peak of *The New York Times* bestseller list.

Time must tell, because books themselves are changing fast. Soon they may well be hand-held computer screens, requiring only the insertion of a disk or chip: this would be the equivalent of owning one blank book, and then being able to insert one set of words after another onto it. (In his review in this issue, Richard Lupoff describes one way to accomplish this feat; with computer technology, it's easier.)

I have some ideas of what we can expect. First, I see writing and storytelling doomed to bloom: with fewer social and economic restrictions on the written word, with everyone able to write and publish, only craft and art, clarity of thought and vision, will allow works to stand apart from other published pieces.

The New York publishing pond will shrink, then stabilize. As the city's advantages in producing and distributing books dwindle, other ponds will grow. The real advantage to publishing in New York City and in London, however, lies in the people gathered there, and I suspect that many schools of talented fish, many pods of committed whales, will continue to plumb the fertile depths.

Computer-generated book forms will not end the lives of cloth-bound books. Rather, the small core audience for such works will be delighted with the beautiful editions produced by dedicated publishers—modern monks illuminating manuscripts.

Be these predictions true or not, I do believe that as the oceans dry, small press publishers will rise from the mud, gain wings, and fly.

—Gordon Van Gelder & the Editors

Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
Paid
Pleasantville, NY
Permit No. 92

The New York Review of Science Fiction

P. O. Box 78, Pleasantville, NY 10570